# Never Gone III

**By: Lilac Moon**

Final in the Never Gone series. Complete! Ch 25 up! Fifteen years have passed since NG II and peace has reigned in the galaxy far, far away. But a new evil is on the horizon that will threaten peace and test the Skywalker family once again. Anidala&more

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# Never Gone III


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# Freedom's Embrace

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars.

AN: Well, here it is! The long anticipated Never Gone III! The third and final installment in the NG series. So, sit back and enjoy, as we embark on the final journey! Be prepared for lots of action, drama, angst, adventure...and of course plenty of romance!

Fifteen years have passed since Never Gone II, so here's an age check:

Anakin-40

Padme-46

Obi-Wan-55

Lea-50

Luke and Leia-20

Han-30

Anna Skywalker-15

Jeena Kenobi-17

Jayden Jinn Kenobi-14

Kira Organa-19

Never Gone III

Chapter 1: Freedom's Embrace

It was a day of great celebration on Ryloth. Slavery was no more, thanks to the galaxy's greatest hero. In the last fifteen years, since the destruction of the last Sith, Anakin Skywalker had made it a point to continue helping people across their vast galaxy, especially slaves. He and his wife had done everything in their power to make slavery illegal on every planet they could. She had done her part in the Senate and he had done his in the field. Ryloth was now joining the list of many now slave free planets. But Anakin had yet to face the planet that would be the greatest undertaking yet. Tatooine. It was a place the Hutts had ruled for centuries and a place where the slave population outnumbered the free citizens. But Anakin Skywalker, the Hero With No Fear, was determined to a see slavery ban on Tatooine through to the end. He shielded his face from the Holonet cameras as best he could as he returned to his ship with Obi-Wan by his side.

"We've done a great thing here, Anakin," Obi-Wan spoke.

"I know. I'm glad that no more Twi'leks will suffer the oppression of slavery. I'm also glad Aayla chose to take part in the enforcement of the law with us," Anakin replied.

"Yes, she is very happy that her people will be free of oppression," Obi-Wan replied.

"Tatooine is next and it will be a massive undertaking. The Hutts will not go down quietly," Anakin replied.

"Yes, well, we all know that if anyone can lead us to a victory, it is you. You are a beacon of hope in this galaxy and people trust you, especially since you made it publically known that you were once a slave and that it is nothing to be ashamed of," Obi-Wan replied. Anakin smiled thinly.

"I'm not so sure that was the best thing to announce. Padme took a couple hits for that one. A Senator married to a former slave didn't set well with a few politicians," Anakin replied.

"Well, they were fools and as I recall, they just elected your wife to a second term as Chancellor," Obi-Wan replied, with a smile.

"Yeah, I guess you're right. I suppose there will always be critics," Anakin replied.

"Of course. But for the most part, the Holonet loves you and Padme. They are always running some story about the two of you. I think I was watching one last night. It was called "Anakin and Padme: The Galaxy's Greatest Love Story," Obi-Wan teased him.

"Half the facts in those corny Holonet programs are not accurate," Anakin warned.

"Yes, well, they are no less entertaining. I believe they have a special on tonight called "The Queen and the Slave" starring the both of you," Obi-Wan teased. Anakin groaned in response.

"We should watch it," Obi-Wan joked.

"No thanks. I think I'd rather spend the evening in the arms of my beautiful Queen," Anakin replied, with a smile.

"Hey dad, come on! Artoo and I've got the ship all ready to go!" Luke called, poking his head outside the ship, his padawan braid swinging by his ear.

"We're coming Luke!" Anakin called to his padawan and son.

"It's about time! Mom will kill us if we're late for Anna's coronation!" Luke called.

"We won't be late. Go ahead and take us up, Luke," he told him. Luke loved when Anakin would let him fly on his own; with Artoo of course.

"You heard him Artoo! Next stop, Naboo!" Luke called. Anakin and Obi-Wan strapped in and the ship lurched, as Luke fired the thrusters.

"Oh dear...I will never get used to flying with a Skywalker," Obi-Wan griped, as Luke pulled back on the controls and they shot into the sky...

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Anna Skywalker was Naboo's newly crowned Queen. The young girl sat nervously in front of the mirror, as her new handmaidens applied the Royal face paint for the first time. When they were finished, her face was pale white and the scar of remembrance was painted elegantly on her lips.

"You look beautiful sweetheart," Padme Amidala-Skywalker told her daughter.

"Thanks mom. Daddy will be here in time, right?" she asked. Padme hugged her daughter.

"Of course he will sweetie. Daddy and I are so proud of you. He wouldn't miss this for the world," Padme said, as her eyes welled with tears. The sandy blonde haired girl rolled her eyes. She looked as much like Padme as Leia did, except her sandy blonde hair and sapphire eyes had been inherited from her father.

"Mom, are you going to start crying?" Anna asked.

"Sorry sweetie. It's just that all my babies are grown up now," Padme sniffed.

"Mom," Anna whined. Leia giggled.

"You should be used to it by now," Leia laughed.

"Now girls, when you become mothers, you will understand," Lea scolded playfully.

"Can we come in?" Jeena asked, as she poked her head through the door.

"Sure kids," Padme replied, as she and her fourteen-year-old brother walked in. Both still had their padawan braids hanging from the side. Jeena looked every bit like her mother, except she had her father's strawberry blonde hair and hazel eyes. Jayden-Jinn was nearly the spitting image of Obi-Wan at his age, but his hair was a dark caramel like his mother's and the same hazel eyes as his father.

"That's a beautiful dress, Anna," Jeena said, as she admired the elaborate black gown her cousin wore.

"Yeah, except you look really weird with all that makeup," Jayden commented.

"Jayden-Jinn Kenobi! Your cousin is the Queen and you should show a little respect!" Lea scolded.

"Sorry," he mumbled. Anna smiled.

"It's okay Jay, it is a little strange to be wearing all this stuff," Anna replied.

"You're going to be a wonderful Queen, sweetheart. Now, we'll all give you a little time to yourself before all the festivities start," Padme said. Her family members filed out of the Queen's spacious suite and Anna sighed, as she took in all that was happening. Like her other siblings, she'd been trained in the Jedi Arts under her father's tutelage. But like her sister Leia, she took after her mother in a lot of ways. Shortly after her sister was named Senator of Naboo, Anna had run for princess of Theed. She loved being on Naboo and wanted to do so much good for it. So, when her mother suggested that she run for Queen, she had and was elected in a landslide vote. She only hoped that she had what it took to be a good Queen...

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Luke brought their ship into the Theed Palace hanger and set it down gently. Artoo rolled down the ramp first, followed by Luke, Anakin, and Obi-Wan.

"I still can't believe my little sister is Queen. That means she can boss me around," Luke said.

"She does anyway," Anakin joked.

"Ha, ha," Luke replied, but then stopped, as he sensed someone he really wanted to see nearby.

"Go on, just don't be late," Anakin said, as he headed into the palace to find his wife.

Luke smiled and dashed around the corner to find his beloved waiting for him.

"Luke! I've missed you," Kira Organa exclaimed, as he took her in his arms and spun her around. He pulled back to gaze at her beauty. She was small and petite, with long blonde curls and soft brown eyes.

"I've missed you too Kira," Luke replied, as he captured her lips in a passionate kiss. She was the Senator of Alderaan and best friend to Leia. And she'd been Luke's girlfriend since she was fifteen. They'd grown up together as friends and their relationship slowly blossomed into love as they had blossomed into young adults.

"Three weeks is much too long to be away from you," Luke said, as he broke the kiss.

"I agree. I say we go to my room...and um, get reacquainted," she replied softly.

"Yeah, we still got a couple hours until this whole coronation thing," Luke replied, with a smile. Kira smiled back and led him inside...

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Motee, who sat at the reception desk, looked up as someone entered the office. She smiled, seeing that it was her Lady's husband.

"Master Skywalker, you're back!" Motee said.

"Hello Motee. Is my wife in her office?" he asked.

"Oh yes, rehearsing her speech for the hundredth time," Motee replied.

"Well, then I'll just have to surprise her," Anakin replied, as he walked to Padme's office door.

"Oh and Motee?" he asked.

"Yes sir?" she answered.

"Hold all my wife's calls," he replied. Motee smiled.

"Yes sir," she responded, as he entered.

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Padme sat at her desk, reading over her speech again when her office door opened. Her face lit up when she saw that her husband was the one to walk through the door.

"Anakin!" she called, as she jumped up and ran into his arms. He hugged her tightly and spun her around. Their lips met in a passionate kiss that was exchanged for several moments, before they finally broke apart.

"You are the most beautiful woman in the galaxy," he said.

"I doubt that, my love. I am getting old," she replied.

"Oh please, you don't look a day over thirty and you know it too," Anakin replied.

"Perhaps, but that is only because your love keeps me young. And you have not changed much either in the last fifteen years. You're still as handsome as ever," she replied.

"I love you and I missed you terribly," he said.

"I missed you too," she replied, as they kissed again, letting all the love they felt for each other flow so effortlessly between them. Anakin lifted her into his arms and she squealed lightly.

"Ani, we're in my office," Padme said. He smirked.

"That's never stopped us before," he replied

"Anyone could walk in, especially one of the kids," Padme replied.

"I told Motee to hold all calls and visitors. Nobody will be coming in until I let them in," he replied, as he tossed her on the couch.

"You're all mine," Anakin said, as he leaned down and kissed her.

"Mmm...then I surrender to you, my handsome Knight," she replied, with a giggle.

"I like the sound of that," Anakin replied, as his lips descended on hers...

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"Dad!" Jayden called, as he ran up and hugged his father.

"Hello Jay, it's good to see you," Obi-Wan said, as he hugged his son.

"Dad, we saw you and uncle Anakin on the Holonet! You freed all those slaves!" Jayden said.

"Yes, it was very rewarding work too," Obi-Wan replied.

"Daddy!" Jeena called, as she hugged her father tightly.

"Hello Jeena," Obi-Wan replied, as he hugged his little girl, who was not so little anymore.

"Jayden, Jeena, please go finish getting ready for the coronation tonight," Lea said, as she approached. The both obeyed and went back to their rooms.

"Hello, my love," Lea said, as she wrapped her arms around his neck.

"Hello to you too," Obi-Wan replied, as their lips met passionately.

"I missed you," Lea told him.

"I missed you too, my love," he replied, as he kissed her again.

"You look a little tired from the trip. Let me make you some caf," Lea said, as they went to the kitchen.

"Well, you know how I hate flying, especially with a Skywalker," he replied. Lea giggled.

"Anakin let Luke fly again, didn't he?" she asked.

"Yes, and he's just as bad as his father," Obi-Wan replied. Lea handed him a cup of the steaming liquid.

"I need to finish ironing your formal robes for tonight," Lea told him, as she kissed his cheek and went in the other room.

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Just thirty minutes before the coronation celebration began, Anna sat in front of her vanity, as her handmaidens finished putting on the elaborate headdress she was to wear with her gown. She was nervous, but her mother had assured her that this was normal. There was a knock at the door and one of her young handmaidens went to deal with the visitor.

"I am sorry, but her majesty cannot have any visitors at this hour," the handmaiden called through the door.

"Oh, I think you can make a small exception for her majesty's father," Anakin's voice called from the other side.

"Daddy! Let him in," she ordered to her handmaiden. Despite her bulky headdress and gown, she ran up to her father and hugged him tightly.

"Goodness Anna, you look just like your mother did when she was Queen," Anakin said, as he pulled back to look at her.

"Thanks daddy," she replied.

"I'm so proud of you, baby girl. I'll see you a few minutes. I have to get back in line for the procession," he said, as he made a quick exit.

"My Queen, are you ready?" one of her handmaidens asked. Anna smiled.

"I am now," she replied.

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Theed Palace was bustling with activity and excitement, as Noble people from Naboo and around the galaxy gathered to see the Chancellor's daughter crowned Queen. Kira Organa stood next to her father Bail near the front of the ball room. Many other notable Senators had attended as well and many rulers of Naboo's allies had come to meet and welcome the new Queen. Shmi Skywalker-Lars and Ruwee and Jobal Naberrie sat near the front as well, being that they were family. Cliegg was not with him, for Shmi had lost him to heart failure five years earlier. Behind them sat Owen, Beru, Darred, Sola, Ryoo and Pooja. At the entrance, a tall blonde man surveyed the room with careful scrutiny.

"Your majesty, I still do not understand what we are doing on this backwater planet!" the dark haired man next to him spouted.

"I am simply here to offer my congratulations to the Chancellor on her daughter's election," the blonde man replied.

"You could have done that over a comm channel, yet we are here," his aide replied.

"If you must know, Jaren, it is the Chancellor's daughter that has brought me here. Do you have any idea what a union between us would mean? They are the most powerful family in the galaxy and I wish to win her heart," the man replied.

"Prince Isolder, I am well aware of the immense power this could grant us both in the Senate and the galaxy. But marrying a child Queen?" Jaren asked.

"I am not interested in the child, Jaren. It is her older sister that I have my eye on. Her beauty is as exquisite as her mother's and she is a powerful voice in the Senate. She would make the perfect princess for me," Isolder replied.

"Have you thought about getting this little proposal past her father?" Jaren asked.

"Do not worry about the courtship. I plan to woo the Senator and her father will not stand in the way of her happiness," Isolder replied.

"And what happens if the esteemed Senator Skywalker rejects you?" Jaren asked.

"She won't," Isolder replied confidently.

"You would do well not to cross her father, your highness," Jaren warned.

"That is exactly why I plan to make a good impression on him this evening," Isolder replied, with the upmost confidence. The room quieted, as the procession began...

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Han Solo cranked the wrench on the bolt he was fastening and wiped the sweat from his brow. He stepped back and looked proudly

at his very own ship, The Millennium Falcon. Han heard a rawl from the other side.

"How's it coming, Chewy?!" he called. Chewy rawled that he was all finished.

"Good, now we can get outta here. If I don't pay Jabba what I owe him, he'll have me for breakfast," Han said. Chewy rawled again.

"Look, I told ya, I ain't gonna ask them for the money!" Han snapped. He threw his towel down and ran a hand through his hair. Fifteen years ago, he'd entered the Republic army with Anakin's recommendation. But, the job had not gone the way Han would have liked. He still had a big problem with authority and he eventually got himself kicked out. He'd been so ashamed that he had refused to go back to Anakin and Padme for help. They would have certainly been disappointed in him and that was just something he didn't think he could handle. So, when Lando offered to let him stay in Cloud City with him, he had taken up that offer. That was where he'd won The Millennium Falcon from and had quickly started his own smuggling business to make ends meet. Unfortunately, he somehow found himself mixed up with Jabba the Hut and now his skin was on the line if he didn't pay Jabba back the money he owed him. To do so, he would have to find a pretty good job.

"Solo!" he heard a gruff voice call.

"Jabba!" Han greeted nervously. Jabba spoke in Huttese and patted Han's shoulder.

"Look Jabba, I'll get you the money. I just need a little more time," Han replied.

" *If you don't, then you'll be Bantha poodoo,"* Jabba spoke.

"Look, I got some pretty powerful friends. I'm sure they got a job I can do and I'll have that money for ya in no time," Han replied.

" *You better, Solo,"* Jabba answered, as she slithered away.

"Great, now what am I gonna do?" Han asked to no one in particular.

" *We could go find your friend, Skywalker. If he's like what you've told me, then he'll help you, no matter what you've done,"* Chewy rawled.

"Guess we got no choice. Set our course for Naboo," Han replied reluctantly. Chewy patted Han's shoulder and walked up the Falcon's ramp.

"I'm gonna pay Jabba his money and then I'm never comin' back to this sand box," Han said, as he walked up the ramp too, ready to head to Naboo...

# The Coronation

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars!

AN: Here's chapter 2! Thanks for the great response! I'm so glad you're all enjoying this final installment!

Fifteen years have passed since Never Gone II, so here's an age check:

Anakin-40

Padme-45

Obi-Wan-55

Lea-50

Luke and Leia-20

Han-30

Anna Skywalker-15

Jeena Kenobi-17

Jayden Jinn Kenobi-14

Kira Organa-19

Never Gone III

Chapter 2: The Coronation

The procession began and Chancellor Amidala-Skywalker entered on her husband's arm. He was dressed in his finest formal black robes and she wore an elaborate royal blue gown. Her hair was up

high in a wrapped headband and her long curls flowed down her back. Luke and Leia followed them. Luke was also dressed in his finest robes and Leia wore a deep maroon gown with her hair in a similar style as her mother's. Luke smiled at Kira, as they passed by her. Luke and Leia stood on either side of their father, while they all stood behind Padme, who stepped to the podium.

"Greetings, fellow Nabooan citizens and friends from other worlds. I come before you this evening with great pleasure to introduce Naboo's newly elected Queen. Though I have introduced Naboo's three previous Queens to you, this coronation holds a special meaning for me, my husband, and our family. Tonight, we present your new Queen to you, who also happens to be our youngest daughter. We know that she will serve Naboo well. We are very proud to present to you, Queen Erilana, Naboo's next Queen," Padme announced. Anna entered in an elaborate black gown with silver trim and designs and full makeup. Her sandy blonde hair was tucked into a glittering silver headdress. Her handmaidens surrounded her, as she walked to the front of the large room and carefully stepped up to the podium. Padme smiled at her and stepped back next to Anakin.

"Fellow citizens, I am honored that you have elected me to be your Queen. I take an oath tonight to serve you, my people and establish a benevolent rule that my predecessors have upheld. You, the people, have put me on this throne with your trust that I can uphold the honor of this post. I shall not betray that trust and I thank you for your faith. I also must take a moment to thank my family and especially my parents. Their love and support is the reason I stand before you tonight. My mother was once your Queen and she remains the most loved and effective Queen in Nabooan history. I will follow her example and use all she has taught me to serve you, as well as she did," Anna concluded. There was applause, as Padme picked up a medal with the Nabooan crest pendant attached.

"Each Queen keeps this crest in her possession during her term. It represents peace and prosperity. Tonight, you shall wear it in honor

of your ascension to this sacred throne," Padme said formally, as she put it around her neck. There was more applause and Padme hugged her daughter.

"Daddy and I are so proud of you," Padme said, as she stepped back to let Anakin hug her. Luke and Leia followed suit.

"We're really proud of you too, baby sister," Luke said.

"Thanks Luke," Anna replied.

"So, can a father get a dance with his baby girl, even though she is now Queen?" Anakin asked.

"You know I always have a dance for you, daddy," Anna replied, as her father led her onto the dance floor. Luke smiled at Kira, as he approached her.

"May I have this dance, milady?" he asked.

"You may," she replied with a smile, as he led her to the dance floor. Anna's dance with her father ended and she accepted a dance with her Uncle Obi-Wan. Anakin gladly accepted his wife's invitation to dance and took her in his arms, as they swayed to the rhythm of the music. Prince Isolder stood in the corner, sipping at his wine, as he watched Leia dance with Bail Organa.

"Isolder, what are you waiting for?" a woman asked. Her face was aged and wrinkles adorned the skin around her eyes and mouth. She had long black hair that was streaked heavily with silver and she wore a long black gown.

"Patience mother, things must be handled delicately. We do not want to tip them off to any of our ulterior motives or should I say *your* ulterior motives," Isolder snapped.

"I will not have you messing this up! We need this union," his mother lectured.

"Yes...to fix your mistakes! You've almost bankrupt us with all your business ventures and expenditures," Isolder replied.

"You are not without fault in this situation, my son!" she yelled.

"I know mother! But if we are not careful, they will see right through us! Believe it or not, I do not want anyone to get hurt. I will romance Leia in hopes that she will accept my marriage proposal. I will not coerce her," Isolder replied.

"And if she rejects you?" his mother asked.

"Then we will find an alternative course of action," Isolder replied.

"You are a naive fool then. There is no alternative," his mother scolded.

"Thank you for your confidence, mother. She will be swayed to me, you'll see," Isolder replied, as he slowly approached her.

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Kira and Leia smiled, as they watched Luke dance with his youngest sister.

"She looks so grown up," Kira mentioned.

"I know. I can scarcely believe that she's actually as old as she is. Even though Jayden is a little younger, everyone is always going to consider her the baby," Leia said.

"Well, I don't think she minds that title too much, being that she comes from such a loving family," Kira replied.

"Hey, your probably going to be a part of this family someday too," Leia replied, with a smile. Kira smiled and blushed, as she gazed out at Luke.

"I hope so," she replied.

"Excuse me, Senator Skywalker, may I have this dance?" Leia looked up to see a handsome man with long ash blonde hair bowing respectfully before her. He was indeed attractive, but not at all her type.

"Um...you may," Leia replied, not wanting to be rude. She was led to the dance floor, just as Luke approached.

"Who is that?" he asked, referring to the man dancing with his twin.

"I don't know. Do you have another dance for me though?" Kira asked, with a smile.

"Of course," he replied, as he led her onto the dance floor.

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Anakin and Padme stood near the front of the room, enduring the most boring part of their evening. Greeting diplomats and accepting their well wishes. Anakin had to resist the urge to yawn, as some Senator carried on an inane conversation with his wife, who was also bored to tears. His attention was perked when he noticed a man he did not recognize, dancing with Leia.

"Thank you Senator Manx, I will take your proposal into consideration," Padme humored the man.

"Angel, do you know who that man is? The one dancing with Leia?" Anakin asked. Padme looked out onto the dance floor and vaguely recognized the young man.

"I think that's Prince Isolder of the Hapes Consortium," Padme answered.

"What is he doing all the way here from Hapes?" Anakin wondered.

"Chancellor Amidala, it's been too long!" a woman exclaimed, as she approached them.

"Queen Mother, Ta'a Chume, how lovely to see you," Padme lied.

"Darling, you haven't changed hardly at all! No one would ever believe that your in your mid forties! What is your secret?" she asked. Padme blanched at her forwardness.

"Ah, no secret really. Love has kept me young, I suppose you could say," Padme replied.

"Oh yes...I'll bet he does keep you young. You must introduce me," the Queen replied, as she looked Anakin up and down. What Padme really wanted to do was claw her eyes out, but as always, she remained professional.

"Queen Chume, this is my husband, Anakin Skywalker," Padme introduced.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, your highness," Anakin replied politely.

"Oh, the pleasure is all mine, Master Skywalker. You are even more handsome in person than on the Holonet. You are a very lucky woman, Chancellor and the envy of just about every woman in the galaxy," the Queen said. Padme suppressed the urge to roll her eyes and changed the subject.

"I see your son has accompanied you. I must say I did not expect you both to make such a long journey for this night," Padme replied.

"Oh darling, when I heard your own little girl was being crowned Queen, we just had to come congratulate you in person. And it seems my son is quite taken with your eldest daughter, Leia," Ta'a replied.

"Quite," Padme replied neutrally.

"I do hope we may catch up during my time here. The last time I saw you, you were just a new Senator and as single as one woman can get. I would love to hear how you managed to capture the heart of a

man like Master Skywalker," the Queen commented. Her comment was meant to sound innocent enough, but Padme caught the thinly veiled insult within her words. And so did Anakin.

"Your majesty, believe me when I say that I am the lucky one who managed to capture her heart," Anakin replied, as he raised his wife's hand to his lips. Padme had to resist the urge to blush. Even after twenty-one wonderful years of marriage, he could still make her knees weak. He still romanced her and made it known that she was the only woman for him.

"It was her that captured my heart when I was just a little boy and by some stroke of good fortune, this angel returned my love. Now, if you'll excuse us, I would very much love to dance with my beautiful wife," Anakin said, as he led her onto the dance floor. Padme giggled, as he twirled her and pulled her into his arms.

"The look on her face was priceless," Padme laughed.

"Well, if she's going to insult you right in front of me, then she deserves everything she gets. What I don't understand is why she came all the way from Hapes for Anna's coronation," he replied.

"Well, if know her, there's ulterior motives for sure," Padme replied.

"What do you know about her?" he asked.

"When I first came to the Senate, she was being charged with fraud and extortion," Padme said. Anakin raised an eyebrow.

"She was cooking the books?" he asked. Padme nodded.

"Yes and she refuted the Senate's claims, telling them that she had been framed by a few conspirators in her cabinet. The Senate convicted her and sent her to prison on a fifteen year sentence. But the Chancellor overturned the ruling, saying he had been given proof of her innocence. Her entire cabinet was arrested and she was pardoned, thus reinstating her as Queen Mother," Padme replied.

"But you think she really was guilty?" he asked.

"She has a strong sway over her people and was a long time supporter of Palpatine. I think they even had a relationship for a while, as gruesome as that is to think about," Padme said.

"Well, I'll keep an eye on them both, especially her son," he replied, as he eyed his daughter still dancing with the prince.

"Now Ani, you can't scare off every potential suitor that our daughters have," Padme lightly scolded.

"Watch me," Anakin mumbled. Padme giggled.

"Now, who knows? Prince Isolder might be very nice. We certainly cannot hold his mother's action against him until we have met him," Padme said.

"Fine, but if his hand moves any lower on my daughter's back, then I'm going to personally break Prince Eyesore in half," Anakin said. Padme burst out laughing, not caring that it disrupted those around her.

"My love, I do believe his name is Isolder," Padme corrected.

"Uh huh," Anakin replied, fully intending to refrain from correcting himself.

---

"I must tell you that I've been an admirer of yours for some time now. Your dedication to your work in the Senate is truly admirable. It seems you inherited more than just your beauty from your mother," Isolder complimented smoothly.

"Thank you, your majesty," Leia accepted his compliment.

"Oh please milady, call me Isolder," he replied.

"If you insist," Leia replied.

"I would like very much to meet your parents. Would you be so kind as to introduce me after our dance?" he asked.

"You want to meet them?" she asked.

"Why of course. I mean, your father is a legend, as is your mother, at least in the political area," he replied.

"You're interested in politics?" she asked.

"Oh yes, the political arena is where I find my strengths. I also love piloting. I believe I have that in common with your father," Isolder replied, as the song ended.

"It looks as though my mother is speaking to them again. This would be the perfect opportunity for me to introduce you to my mother as well," Isolder replied. Leia really wasn't interested in him, but allowed him to lead her over to them.

---

"Mister Solo, it's good to see you again. Or is it Captain now?" Typho asked, as he shook Han's hand.

"Yeah, it's Captain now. Sort of got my own business. This is Chewy, my partner," Han introduced. Typho nodded politely to the Wookie and Chewy rawled.

"If your partner is okay with staying here for the moment, I can take you up to the festivities to see Anakin and Padme," Typho said.

"Uh...I ain't exactly dressed for a party," Han replied. Typho smiled.

"Nonsense, they'll be thrilled to see you," Typho replied.

"Well, okay. I'll be back soon, Chewy," Han said, as he left the palace hanger with Typho.

"So, what's the celebration for?" Han asked. Typho smiled.

"Our little Anna has just been crowned Queen. Tonight is her coronation," Typho replied. Han's eyes widened.

"Anna? But she was just a baby the last time I saw her," Han replied.

"It's been fifteen years, Solo. The kids are not so little anymore. Luke is preparing for the trials, Leia is a Senator now, and Anna has also followed in her mother's footsteps by becoming Queen," Typho replied.

"Sounds like I've missed a lot," Han answered.

"Yes, but you'll fit right back in, I'm sure," Typho replied, as they neared the ball room.

---

"Chancellor Amidala-Skywalker, it is a great honor to finally meet you. It is easy to see where Leia has inherited her incredible beauty from," Isolder said, as he kissed Padme's hand.

"Thank you, Prince Isolder. That is very kind of you to say," Padme replied.

"And Master Skywalker, it is great honor to meet the savior of the galaxy as well. I grew up on stories of your adventures," Isolder said.

"Nice to meet you too," Anakin lied.

"Leia, this is my mother, Queen Mother Ta'a Chume," Isolder introduced.

"It is lovely to meet you, your majesty," Leia replied.

"Likewise, darling," she replied.

"I haven't got to dance with my oldest daughter tonight. How about it, princess?" Anakin asked Leia.

"Sure daddy," Leia replied, as they walked onto the dance floor.

"I must tell you, Chancellor, that I am quite taken your daughter," Isolder said. Padme was silent and he continued.

"Her beauty, intellect, and prowess in the political arena have astounded me like no other woman ever has. I would like permission to court your daughter," Isolder asked formally. Padme had seen it coming a mile away, but it still did not erase the eery and foreboding feeling in her. The Queen, as poor an actress as she was, pretended to be delightfully surprised.

"Oh my son! What a wonderful beginning this could be for our families!" The Queen exclaimed.

"Prince Isolder, I do not make decisions for my daughter. If you wish to ask her on a date, then you must ask her yourself. Her father and I shall never force one of our children into a union. They will all choose the people they wish to be with and there will be no political marriages of any kind in this family. If your intentions for her are pure, then you may ask her if she is interested in dating you. If she is not, then you will not press the issue," Padme said sternly. Isolder's heart sank. The Chancellor had indeed looked right through them. But it was possible he could still salvage his image. He really did like Leia and found her incredibly attractive.

"Forgive me, Chancellor, but I assure you that my intentions are pure. I promise I would never do anything to harm her," Isolder replied.

"See that you don't. My husband is not a man you want to anger and he is very protective of his family. Hurt one of our babies and your life will be forfeit. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have other delegates I must greet," Padme excused herself and Isolder gulped nervously.

"This was a bad idea, mother," Isolder replied.

"You are such a coward," Ta'a scolded.

"You heard her mother! If they knew why we really need Leia, we'd both be on our way to the palace dungeon!" Isolder exclaimed quietly.

"Not if we are careful. Go on, ask the little Senator to accompany you to some social outing. We are not finished yet," Ta'a said. Isolder sighed, worked up his courage, and walked onto the dance floor.

---

"So, this Prince Eyesore, what is he up to?" Anakin asked.

"Daddy, his name is Isolder and he was very nice to me. He's not really my type, but I humored him. He is a guest, after all," Leia replied.

"Just be careful, princess. I think he's up to something. Or at least, his mother is," Anakin replied.

"Daddy, I'm not a baby anymore and you taught me how to take care of myself," Leia said.

"You're always going to be my little girl, Leia. And...I know I need to let go, but it's hard for me," Anakin replied. Leia hugged him.

"I'll always need you, daddy," Leia promised.

"Excuse me, Master Skywalker, but may I cut in?" Isolder asked. Anakin glared at him.

"It's okay daddy," Leia replied. Anakin let Isolder cut in, but fixated a glare on him, as he walked way. Isolder knew Anakin would be watching him.

"Your father carries a formidable presence," Isolder said.

"Daddy is very protective, but he's about the best dad any kid could ever ask for," Leia replied.

"It is wonderful that you have so many people that love you. Many envy that," he said.

"Yes, I am very lucky," she answered.

"Leia, I would like to ask you if you'd like to accompany me to dinner and perhaps a showing of the Nabooan symphony tomorrow night," Isolder asked.

"Prince Isolder, you are very nice, but I do not really feel anything between us," Leia replied.

"One date Leia, that is all I ask. I am quite taken with you," Isolder replied. Leia contemplated for a moment and decided that there was no harm in one date.

"All right...one date," Leia relented.

"You will not regret this milady. I promise you will have a wonderful time," he replied. Leia sighed and looked over to her family. They were gathering around a very familiar looking brown-haired man.

"Oh my goodness...it's Han," Leia said.

"Excuse me Isolder, but an old family friend has just arrived," Leia said, as she left him behind on the dance floor.

---

"Milady, I found this old friend wandering in the palace hanger," Typho said. Padme gasped and hugged the young man before her.

"Han! Oh, it's been so long!" Padme exclaimed.

"Hello Miss Padme," Han replied.

"Look at you. You've grown up to be so handsome," Padme replied. Han blushed.

"Nah, you look great though. Haven't changed at all," Han replied.

"Han, is that really you?" Anakin asked.

"Sure is," Han replied, as he extended his hand. Anakin took his hand and pulled the young man into a hug.

"We've missed you! What kept you away for so long?" Anakin asked.

"Ah, you know, lots of stuff I guess. Thought I'd drop in and catch up," Han replied.

"Wow, it really is you!" Han heard a young male voice say. He turned and swore he was looking at a younger copy of Anakin.

"Luke? Boy, someone sprouted nicely. How ya been, kid?" he asked.

"Great! And you?"

"Oh you know me, I'm always hanging in there. So, you gonna introduce me?" Han asked, noticing the girl next to him.

"Oh yeah, Han, this is my girlfriend Kira. Kira, this is Han Solo," Luke said. Kira shook his hand.

"It's nice to meet you Han. I've heard a lot about you from Luke's parents," Kira replied.

"So, I hear the little one is Queen now," Han replied.

"Yeah, she's out there on the dance floor somewhere. I'll go get her," Luke said.

"Hello Han," a female voice drew his attention and he looked up to find the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen.

"Well, look at you princess. You're all grown up now," Han replied.

"So are you. It's been a long time," Leia replied, as she hugged him timidly.

"Yeah, it has," Han replied, as he stared at her. Padme smiled knowingly, as she watched them interact.

"Leia, why don't you and Han dance," Padme suggested.

"Would you like to?" Leia asked.

"Ah, I'm not really dressed for this kind of thing," Han replied.

"Oh come on, it will be fun!" Leia replied, as she pulled him onto the dance floor.

---

"Who is that scruffy looking urchin that she's dancing with?" Ta'a snapped.

"I don't know mother. Leia said he was an old family friend," Isolder replied, as he watched her.

"You better see that he does not spoil our plans," she said.

"Don't worry mother. I am the one she is accompany on an outing tomorrow night," Isolder replied. Ta'a smiled evilly.

*"My plans are working...and everything will fall into place. Amidala will be dethroned and the only true ruler this galaxy has ever had will rise...again..."* the Queen hissed silently to herself...

# Lurking Evil

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars.

AN: Here's chapter 3! Thanks for all the great reviews so far. I'm really glad you're all enjoying this story and I am really excited about it!

Never Gone III

Chapter 3: Lurking Evil

Leia smiled, as they swayed to the soft music.

"So, what have you been doing all these years?" Leia asked. Han winced inwardly. That was the last question he wanted to answer.

"Ah, you know, just been doing odd jobs here and there. The whole military thing didn't work out really. Not my style, ya know? I got a ship and I sort of just go where the jobs are," Han said.

"Freelance agent," she said. Han smiled.

"Yeah, sorta like that. Anyway, I hear you're a big time Senator now," Han mentioned.

"Yes, though I'm finding that my mother has some big shoes to fill. The man that replaced her when she was elected Chancellor for the first term just couldn't quite live up to the high standards our people have set for our leaders," Leia said.

"Yeah, but yur a chip off the old block. The other guy couldn't hack it, cause he wasn't a Skywalker," Han said. Leia giggled.

"Well, thanks for the vote of confidence, Han," she replied.

"Anytime, so who's the stiff?" Han asked.

"The stiff?" she asked in confusion.

"This guy over here that's staring me down?" Han asked.

"Oh, that's Prince Isolder of Hapes. He hounded me all night until I agreed to go on a date with him tomorrow night. I'm really not looking forward to it," Leia said. Han felt his heart sink a little at the mention of her dating and he didn't really know why.

"Well, if he knows what's good for him, he won't get too pushy. Your dad'll be waiting for an opportunity to mess him up if he tries anything with his little girl," Han said.

"Yes, he's already received several of daddy's death glares. I figure I will humor him with one date since he is a guest here and then gently let him down," Leia said. Han felt his hopes lift a little, as he learned that she wasn't interested in the pompous prince.

"Oh, there's Anna. Come on," Leia said, as she led him off to the side where her family was gathering.

"Han, this is Anna," Leia introduced him

"You probably don't remember me," Han said to her.

"No, but I've heard all the stories. It's nice to meet you," she replied.

"Pleasure's all mine, kid. Oh, I mean your majesty," Han said. Anna giggled.

"That's okay, Han. You don't have to call me that," Anna replied.

"Han, it's so nice to see you again," Lea said.

"Hello Miss Lea, Master Kenobi," Han greeted.

"It's good to see you are well, Han," Obi-Wan replied.

"Everything's starting to wind down. I hope you'll be staying Han. I had a room prepared for you," Padme said.

"Oh, you didn't have to go through all that trouble. I can just sleep in my ship," Han said.

"You're a guest, Han. I won't have you sleeping in your ship," Padme protested.

"Well, you see, I brought my partner along and he's a Wookie. He's friendly, but he might scare some," Han replied.

"We'd love to have him too, Han. I'll warn the staff and tell them not to be frightened," Padme replied.

"I'll go down with you and help with your bags. I'd like to see your ship," Anakin replied. Han smiled.

"Sure thing. Prepared to be impressed," Han said.

"Ani, don't get your good clothes dirty," Padme warned.

"Hey, it's me," he grinned at her.

"I know, that's why I said it," she replied, as they left for the palace hanger.

"It sure is great having Han back," Luke mentioned to his sister.

"Yes...it is," she replied. The celebration wound down. Some guest departed and others were given accommodations for the evening, as the hour had grown late.

---

"Well, here she is," Han said.

"You were right. I'm impressed. A Corellian freighter of this design is no easy ship to pilot," Anakin said.

"Hey, you taught me. Besides, some of the credit has to go to my co-pilot. Chewy, come down here!" Han called. The Wookie rawled and walked down the ramp.

"This is Chewy," Han introduced.

"It's nice to meet you Chewy. I'm Anakin Skywalker," Anakin replied. Chewy rawled a friendly greeting, before Han grabbed a satchel and Anakin led them up to the guest wing of the palace.

---

Anakin stepped into the palace suite he shared with his wife and smiled, as he saw her on the veranda. She wore a lovely, long shimmer silk night gown in a soft pink color and he watched, as she brushed out her long curls. He undressed and set his light saber on the night stand, before pulling on his sleep pants and padding out to join his wife, who was star gazing. He wrapped his arms around her from behind and kissed her cheek. She looked up and smiled softly at him.

"Is Han settled?" she asked.

"Yes, I told him we'd see him at breakfast in the morning," Anakin replied.

"You haven't had time to tell me about your time on Ryloth," Padme mentioned.

"It was amazing, Padme. Freeing those people was one of the most gratifying things I've ever done. Aayla stayed behind, as you know to help run the first free election. Now that we've overthrown the crime family that ran things, all the profits from businesses can go to the owners and workers now. There's a lot of work ahead of them, but they're on their way to a better way of life," Anakin replied.

"I'm so glad and I'm so proud of you, sweetheart," she replied, as she kissed him softly. With arms around each other, they went inside for the evening and climbed into bed. Padme cuddled against his

bare chest and Anakin wrapped his arm around her. After sharing several soft kisses, Anakin turned out the light and they slowly drifted to sleep in each other's loving embrace...

---

Jaren, Prince Isolder's aide, looked over from his bed to the Prince. Once he was positive Isolder was asleep, he slipped from his own bed and quietly went to the door that adjoined Isolder's room with the Queen Mother's. Jaren slipped into her room where she stood waiting.

"It is risky for us to speak with Isolder so close by!" Jaren said.

"I have just been in contact with Kamino," Ta'a said. Jaren looked up at her in surprise.

"Is it ready?" he asked.

"Yes and we will soon travel to Korriban. Are you certain you know how to perform the ritual?" Ta'a asked.

"Of course I do, mother! I've been studying the holocrons for years!" Jaren snapped.

"Steady your temper, my son. No one must know you are really my son and half brother to Isolder until the time is right, not even Isolder himself," Ta'a replied.

"I know mother. I grow tired of playing servant to the little bastard when I am the true prince!" Jaren said.

"I know my son and you will take your true place very soon. Isolder is but a pawn, but you are the true son. Soon, your father will rise to power again and you shall take your place at his side. And...the Chosen One will be made to pay for your father's murder," the Queen said darkly.

"I will destroy him for killing my father. The Skywalkers will all pay for the pain they have caused us, mother, I promise you that," Jaren stated, clenching his teeth in anger. His eyes bled yellow, before fading back to blue-green...

---

The next morning, Han and Chewy entered the private dining room Padme had set aside for breakfast with only family allowed.

"Good morning, Han," Padme greeted cheerfully.

"Good morning, Miss Padme," he replied.

"This is Chewy. Chewy, this is Padme, Anakin's wife," Han introduced.

"It's nice to meet you Chewy. I trust you both slept well and you're hungry," Padme said. Chewy rawled.

"We did and we're starved," Han replied, with a smile.

"Good," she replied, as they all sat down to breakfast together. Luke munched contentedly on his shuura fruit and smirked, deciding it was time to have a little fun.

"Leia has a date tonight," Luke said. Leia, who was sitting next to him, stomped on his foot underneath the table.

"OUCH!" Luke exclaimed.

"Date? What date?" Anakin asked. Leia gave her twin a death glare, promising payback.

"It's nothing daddy. Prince Isolder asked me and it would be rude for me as a Galactic Senator to decline. I'm not looking forward to it, but after I go, I can politely decline anymore invitations. Besides, he'll be leaving soon and that will be the end of it," Leia replied.

"I don't trust him. And your mother and I both don't trust his mother," Anakin said. Leia rolled her eyes.

"Daddy, I'm the same age as Luke and I can take care of myself. You taught me how yourself," Leia replied.

"It's not you I don't trust, princess. Just be careful," Anakin pleaded. Leia smiled.

"I will daddy," she replied. Conversation wafted around the table, as it usually did when they all sat down together. Han remembered his times with the Skywalker and Kenobi families fondly and he surprisingly found himself falling right back in with them as if he'd never left.

---

Jeena's emerald blade clashed with Jayden's sapphire saber, as the sparred in the palace gym. Obi-Wan observed them from the sidelines. Jayden blocked Jeena's strike, but did not anticipate her sweep kick and landed flat on his back, ending the duel.

"Very good, Jeena," Obi-Wan said.

"Thanks daddy," she replied, as she helped her pouting brother up.

"That was unfair," Jayden griped.

"You must be ready for anything, son. An enemy will never fight fairly," Obi-Wan reminded him. Jayden nodded.

"All right, go clean up. And if you see your cousin, tell him he's already five minutes late," Obi-Wan said, referring to Luke.

---

Stacks of datapads sat forgotten on Kira's desk in the office she used in the palace when they were here. She hummed pleasurably, as Luke plundered her mouth passionately, kissing her again and

again. She gasped for air, as he released her lips and kissed down her neck, while pressing her back against the wall.

"Luke...I have lots of work to do..." she said. He smirked and looked at her.

"This is much more fun than work," he replied, with a smirk, as he captured her lips in his own again.

"You're ten minutes late for sparring," she warned. He groaned.

"I'm a Skywalker. I'd probably give Uncle Ben a heart attack if I showed up on time," Luke joked.

"Well, you're plenty late, so you better go. Besides, you'll have me all to yourself tonight. We'll got to dinner at that nice little café we love in Theed square. Then, we take a romantic moonlit walk and then...we'll come back to our room for some...alone time," she said in a sultry tone. Luke grinned.

"Can't wait for that," he replied, as he kissed her again.

"Mmm...me either, but you need to go right now. I love you though," she said, as her brown eyes sparkled with her smile. He smiled back.

"I love you too," he replied, as he headed for the door. He turned and kissed her goodbye, as the door opened. Kira smirked and playfully smacked his rear.

"Go on," she urged.

"I'll get you back for that later," he promised. She giggled.

"You better," she called, as he finally left and sprinted toward the gym.

Anakin wrenched the bolt back into place and then rolled out from underneath the Falcon.

"That should do it. Go ahead and try it Chewy!" Anakin called. Chewy rawled and the engines hummed to life, steady and quietly.

"Man, I've been tryin' to get rid of that clinking noise for months and you do it in twenty minutes!" Han said.

"It's a fairly easy fix if you know where to look," Anakin shrugged, as he wiped his greasy hands on a rag.

"Thanks. I owe ya one," Han replied.

"It's not a problem, Han. Besides, you know how I love to work on ships, especially ones like this one. How'd you acquire her anyway?" Anakin asked.

"What makes ya think I didn't buy her?" Han asked. Anakin smirked back.

"This is me, Han. I have a whole hanger full of different ships, so I know what this one would cost, especially since it's Corellian," Anakin replied.

"Yeah, I know. It's a funny story actually. Remember Lando?" Han asked.

"Oh sure, are you guys still friends?" Anakin asked.

"Oh yeah, he has this big fancy job on Cloud City. Anyway, he was pretty peeved at me when I won this ship from him in a Sabaac game. Lando got really drunk and bet the ship. He says I took advantage of the fact he was hammered, but I told him that he better learn to hold his liquor better if he's gonna gamble with a bunch of scoundrels," Han said.

"Good advice. Leia said you'd been taking odd jobs and freelance stuff," Anakin mentioned. Han winced. He hated lying to Anakin and

he hoped that the Jedi Master didn't pick up on it. He just wasn't ready to come clean with him yet.

"Yeah, I take jobs here and there. I've been needing something lately though. You know of anything?" Han asked. Anakin smirked. He sensed that Han had something bothering him, but he wouldn't push. Like his own children always did, Han would talk when he was ready.

"As a matter of fact, I do. You interested?" Anakin asked.

"Sure. I'm up for anything ya got," Han replied.

"Good, then you've just become Leia's new bodyguard," Anakin replied.

"Is she in danger?" Han asked.

"No, nothing like that really. But being in the public eye, she still needs security, no matter what. Like her mother of course, she insists that she does not need any. She's fired every guard I've hired for her, but since she feels comfortable with you, being that you're a friend, she will likely agree. Albeit reluctantly, of course. She's as stubborn as her mother. And now, with this Prince Isore guy and his infatuation with her, I'm just a little worried," Anakin said. Han smirked at the "Isore" label, as Anakin refused to call him anything else.

"You think I'm being paranoid and overprotective, don't you?" Anakin asked.

"Nah, I don't trust Prince pretty pants any farther than I could throw him. Especially not after the whole Palo fiasco with Miss Padme. If she's got a potential stalker, I think we better nip it in the bud before his infatuation turns into psychotic obsession," Han replied. Anakin smiled.

"Does that mean you're accepting the position?" Anakin asked.

"Only if Chewy can be my backup," Han replied.

"You'd really think I'd object to a seven foot tall Wookie guarding my daughter?" Anakin asked. Han smirked.

"Thought you might be all right with that," Han replied.

"Well, let's go break the news to her," Anakin said, patting him on the back.

"Should I wear a helmet?" Han joked, making Anakin laugh.

---

"Daddy, this is completely unnecessary!" Leia cried.

"Well, I think it is. No more arguments, Leia. You're in public service and you need security, Jedi training or not. Luke or I might not always be there, especially when we go on missions," Anakin said.

"Mom," Leia looked to Padme for support.

"Sweetheart, I have to agree with your father on this. Take it from someone who's been in public service for a long time and someone whose had numerous attempts on her life. I'd feel better knowing you have protection. Besides, it's Han and you're comfortable with him," Padme replied. Leia rolled her eyes and smoothed her black evening gown.

"Fine, I'm leaving now, so I can get this stupid date over with," Leia replied, as she stomped out of the room. Han smirked.

"I'll keep an eye on her," Han said, as he followed her out.

"She took that better than I thought she would," Anakin said. Padme smiled and wrapped her arms around his neck.

"So, I was thinking since all the kids are busy tonight, I thought I'd have the staff bring dinner to our room, since it will be just you and

me. We'll have dinner, wine, candlelight, soft music..." she trailed off, as their lips met.

"Sounds like the perfect evening," he replied, as their lips met again in a tender kiss.

---

Leia was so bored. She'd been listening to Isolder ramble on for nearly an hour about the reforms he'd proposed to parliament and all the wonderful things he'd done for his government. She was interested in politics too, but this was ridiculous! She felt bad though, since Isolder was very nice and a gentleman as well. However, he was putting her to sleep. She glanced over, seeing Han near the entrance, watching security. He could tell she was bored and he made a silly face at her. Leia giggled and Isolder looked at her in confusion.

"Is something humorous, milady?" he asked. Leia suppressed an eye roll. This guy really needed to loosen up.

"I apologize, Isolder. I was just thinking about something funny that happened the other day," she lied.

"Do you mind if we return to the palace now? I have an early meeting I must attend," Leia said. The disappointment on Isolder's face could not be hidden.

"Of course, milady," he answered.

---

As they entered through the garden entrance, Leia turned to Isolder.

"Thank you for a lovely dinner, your majesty. I hope your stay on Naboo has been pleasant," Leia said.

"Oh it has," Isolder replied, as he took her hand.

"Almost as pleasant as being in your company," Isolder replied, as he kissed her hand. Leia sighed

"Isolder, you are very nice, but I don't feel any kind of connection with you. I don't foresee any romantic involvement with you in the future, but I would like to remain friends," Leia said.

"I am quite taken with you, Leia. Are you sure you will not allow me to court you?" he asked.

"I'm sorry, but I am afraid I cannot accept," Leia replied. Isolder lowered his head.

"I appreciate your kindness. Good night, Leia," he said, as he kissed her cheek.

"Good night, Isolder," she replied, as she met Han at the palace entrance and let him escort her to her room. Isolder watched her go and was startled when his mother came out of no where.

"What are you doing, mother?" he hissed.

"Watching you give up like a coward. You could have been more insistent with her!" Ta'a exclaimed.

"She's not interested in me, mother, no matter how much I wish she was," Isolder replied.

"Don't worry, my son. I have a plan that will ensure that Leia shall be yours," Ta' a

"What are you up to, mother?" he asked.

"You'll find out soon enough, son. Tomorrow, we'll return to Hapes and then my plan will be put into motion. You must not worry about anything. All will work out, as it should. Now, go inside and get some rest," Ta'a said.

"Goodnight mother," Isolder replied, as he left for his room, once he was gone," Jaren stepped out of the shadows.

"What a pathetic weakling!" Jaren growled.

"Be calm, my son, everything is going according to plan. I will tell Isolder I have sent you on an important errand. We will proceed as we discussed earlier," Ta'a replied.

"My shuttle leaves for Kamino in an hour. I will see you on Korriban in a few days...and then, those who have wronged us will pay..."

# Shadows in the Light

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars.

AN: Here's chapter 4! Thanks for all the great reviews! Enjoy!

Never Gone III

Chapter 4: Shadows in the Light

Padme giggled, as he nibbled at her neck, as they swayed slowly to the music. He smirked and kissed her sweet lips passionately.

"Mmm...that is some good desert," he said. Padme laughed, as she ran her fingers through his hair. Padme rested her head against his chest and breathed in his scent.

"You know, our twenty-second anniversary is coming up in a few months," Anakin mentioned. Padme lifted her head from his chest.

"I know. Twenty-two wonderful years. You're still as handsome now as you were the day you walked back into my life and swept me off my feet," she replied, with a soft smile.

"And you're even more beautiful, if that's possible," he said.

"Please...I am getting gray hairs," Padme complained. Anakin rolled his eyes.

"Where? I see none," he replied.

"They are there, believe me. You just have to look closely," she answered.

"Whether you have a few gray hairs or a lot of gray hairs, you'll still be the most beautiful woman in the galaxy," he told her with a

sincerity only her Ani had. Even after all these years, he could still make her insides turn to mush.

"So, I was thinking that you and I should take a trip somewhere, just the two of us for a couple weeks for our anniversary. I'm not sure where yet, but we can decide that later. What do you say?" he asked. Her eyes sparkled with love.

"I say that a vacation for two with no Jedi or Senate sounds simply blissful," she replied, as she pressed her lips to his.

"I love you, Ani...so very much," Padme said softly, as she held his face in her hands. He smiled at her.

"And I, you, my sweet angel," he replied, as their lips met again.

"My love..." Padme whispered, as his lips trailed down her neck. As he lifted her into his arms, he raised his hand. The Force obeyed his call and the candlelight flickered out...

---

Leia sat hunched over her desk, going over several forms and requisitions. She knew it was late and she should turn in, but Leia tended to overwork herself; much like her mother had been known to. Padme was always telling Leia about how much she reminded her of herself before she had met daddy again. It was her mother's subtle way of telling her that it was okay to have a personal life and that she shouldn't work herself into an early grave. She knew her mother hoped she would find someone special to spend her life. And truthfully, Leia hoped she would be lucky enough to find love. But Leia's parents were a rare thing in the Senate. Most Senators her mother's age were on their third husband or wife or were still married to their first and committing adultery. It was more than enough to make one cynical about love. Granted, she had been extremely lucky to grow up with two parents that loved each other so completely and so deeply. Even her Uncle Ben and Aunt Lea were the same, never ever straying from the other. But her parents shared a love and connection that seemed so surreal and so very

untouchable for most. In an arena that was rampant with divorce, infidelity, and political marriages, true love was not real and tangible like it seemed for her parents. Thus, Leia doubted true love would find her and therefore, she decided not to seek it. Leia was genuinely afraid of being hurt if she did fall in love. Her father would never hurt her mother, for she and his children were everything to him. But what guarantee did Leia have of that? If she did fall in love, how did she know he would not hurt her? She didn't know and Leia hated the unknown. Leia jumped with a start, as she heard a male voice.

"It's late. You still up?" Han asked.

"Han, you startled me," Leia replied.

"Sorry," he responded.

"I was just getting ready to turn in. What are you still doing up?" she asked.

"Security. Everything's pretty quiet and if anything is going on, Chewy will hear it first," Han said.

"You're really taking this job seriously," she said.

"Well, if your dad thinks it's an important job that needs to be done, then it is," Han replied.

"You really respect him," Leia stated.

"I may have trouble with most authority, but Anakin's the exception. He gave me a chance when everyone else had gave up on me. My dad, my teachers, everybody. And I'm honored he trusts me enough to guard his daughter," Han replied. Leia smiled.

"Well, it's not like you haven't looked after us before. We'll never forget how you protected mom from that monster that awful day on the Death Star," Leia replied.

"I wasn't sure you remembered any of that. You were pretty little," Han said.

"We were, but Luke and I remember it all. Maybe it has something to do with being Force sensitive. But for a while there, I was pretty sure I was never going to see my parents again. Luke and I had nightmares for a couple months after that and so did mom. Once in a while, mom will still have a nightmare about Palo. We owe you a lot," she said.

"You don't owe me anything. I'm just glad your dad killed all those crazy bastards," Han replied. Leia smiled.

"Me too. We should probably turn in," Leia said, as she turned off her desk lamp.

"Goodnight Han," Leia said, as she retreated to her bedroom.

"Goodnight Leia," he replied, as he watched her go, before going to his own room.

---

Kira giggled, as Luke tickled her sides.

"Stop that," she whispered, as they walked through the halls in the bowels of the palace. They had come in the back way to bypass Captain Typho, so he could not tell their parents that it was 4 a.m. when they got in. While they were not kids anymore, they would still get lectures from their overprotective parents about being out at all hours of the night. They had gone dancing at one of Theed's upscale night clubs after dinner and lost track of time. Kira smacked his hand and shushed him, as they tiptoed through the halls. Suddenly, she jumped, as she heard an eerie sound.

"What was that?" she asked.

"A ghost," he answered. She smacked his arm.

"It was not," she replied.

"Didn't you know this part of the palace is haunted?" Luke asked.

"It is not," she protested.

"Uncle Ben killed the first Sith in a Millennium down here. And dad killed two more here. One up in the parliament rotunda and another right in the same room Darth Maul died," Luke said.

"Okay...that's creepy. Let's go upstairs," she said.

"Wait...aren't you curious to see the room? I know I am," Luke said, as he started walking toward the eerie control room.

"Luke, let's go, please," Kira pleaded.

"We will. I just want to take a peak," Luke said. As they neared the old, rundown control room, the eerie hollers and sounds became louder. Kira clutched Luke's arm, as they went in.

"Okay, we've seen it. Let's go," Kira said.

"Calm down. There's nothing that can hurt you in here. And even if there was, I'd protect you," he promised. Luke looked over into the abyss where Maul had fallen and it was clear that the eerie sounds were coming from the dark pit.

"Wow...listen to all that activity. It's never been like this before," Luke said.

"I don't understand," Kira replied in confusion.

"Dad says that since Maul died here, there's a high concentration of evil in this room," Luke replied.

"Luke, are you saying that we're standing on Sith hell?" Kira asked.

"In some ways, you could say that I guess. But dad says it's more like a portal to it. They can't get out or anything, but the unrest of their spirits makes this place seem haunted," Luke explained.

"You mean, they actually have spirits?" Kira asked.

"Well, everything has a spirit. Those that are Force sensitive keep their identities and become either Force spirits of the light side...or Force demons of the dark side. Those that are connected in some way to either also are allowed to keep their identities," Luke explained.

"So, if you have family members...or someone you love that aren't Force sensitive, then they can retain their identity?" she asked.

"Yes. But it works the same way for the Sith too. Those connected to the Sith in anyway may also retain their identities. Pretty supernatural, huh?" he smirked.

"More like, pretty creepy. Can we please go now?" she asked. He smiled at her uneasiness and wrapped his arm around her waist.

"Anything you want, beautiful," he replied, as they walked out.

---

The next afternoon, Luke sparred furiously with his father in the gym. Luke smirked, as he parried and evaded his father's intense strikes. With a swift movement, he trapped his father's wrist in a move that could have taken his hand off if he were against an enemy.

"Gotcha dad," Luke smirked.

"Not quite, my son," Anakin smirked back, as he reversed Luke's hold on his wrist with lightning speed. Before Luke knew what was happening, his father had his weapon and he was flat on his back.

"How does he do that?" Luke whispered to himself. At the end of most their sparring sessions, Luke's weapon usually ended up in

Anakin's hand.

"Years of practice. This weapon is your life. You need to learn not to get so cocky or it will get you knocked on your ass, literally. And the enemy will not be as kind as I am," Anakin replied, as helped his son up.

"Hey dad, can I ask you something?" Luke asked.

"Of course," Anakin replied

"Well, I know that sometimes Force spirits can appear to us if they choose to...but can Force demons?" Luke asked.

"You got in late last night, so you came in the back and went snooping around in the old control room again, didn't you?" Anakin asked.

*"Sith..."* Luke swore silently.

"Dad, I'm twenty-years-old. So, Kira and I came home late, big deal," Luke said.

"As long as your late night carousing doesn't interfere with your duties as a Jedi and hers as a Senator, then I have no problem. But what is your fascination with that room?" Anakin asked. Luke shrugged.

"It was even creepier down there than usual though. The noises and howling was loud, like there was a lot of activity or something," Luke said.

"Just stay out of there, Luke. It's no place to be taking your girlfriend anyway," Anakin replied.

"I'm just curious," Luke responded.

"Yes and curiosity killed the nexu," Anakin quipped.

"Ah, it's not like the Sith demons can get out. They're condemned to Sith hell for eternity, right?" Luke asked.

"Yes, that's true. But just the same, stay out of there, all right?" Anakin replied. Luke rolled his eyes.

"That's an order, padawan," he said.

"Yes Master," Luke obeyed.

"All right, go hit the shower," Anakin said, tossing a towel at him. After showering himself, Anakin went to find Obi-Wan.

---

"Anakin, I still don't understand why you're dragging me down here," Obi-Wan griped, as they entered the bowels of the palace.

"Something Luke was telling me bothered me. I just want to check it out," Anakin replied.

"Fine. And I guess I'm along for the ride on this wild Gundark chase," Obi-Wan quipped.

"Shh...listen Master. Do you hear that?" Anakin asked, as an eerie sound whispered through the halls.

"That is loud. We're still several feet away from the room," Obi-Wan said. As Anakin and Obi-Wan approached the room, the noise increased in fury and volume.

"They have an awareness of your presence," Obi-Wan said.

"And yours. You helped put some of them where they are," Anakin replied.

"Maybe, but it is your light that is making them angry. They sensed you in Luke last night," Obi-Wan replied.

"Master, it's not possible for them to get out, is it?" Anakin asked.

"There is a way, but only a Sith Master can perform the ritual...and even then, they would only be demon spirits. Frightening they would be, perhaps, but tangible, no. Physically, they could not hurt anyone. Besides, all the Sith are dead," Obi-Wan replied. Anakin nodded.

"This room is strong in the dark side and the demons feast on the darkness. Your light is making them angry and restless. Perhaps we should put the force field up to keep curious young padawans out," Obi-Wan suggested.

"Good idea," Anakin replied, as he did so at the control panel and they left.

---

*A few days later...Korriban...*

Jaren's boots sounded thickly on the cracked and worn duracrete floor of the ancient Sith Temple. He had come from the watery world of Kamino with a Clone of his father's body. The Clone was aged to roughly that of forty and it was in a vegetative state. However, if he performed the ritual correctly, that would not be the case much longer. If he could release his father's spirit, it would inhabit this body and grant him life again. Then...the Chosen One would pay dearly for crossing the greatest Sith Master the galaxy had ever known. Jaren's cloak billowed around him, as he stared at the face of his father through the preservation chamber.

"Are you ready, my son?" Ta'a asked.

"Yes Mother," Jaren said, as he stepped to the middle of the room where a stalagmite stood. It had been rounded off and hollowed, thus serving as a place for Sith dark waters to remain. Jaren dipped his hands in the silvery-black water, letting it soak his skin for a moment. He took them out and took the Sith medallion his mother handed him. He put it around his neck and then reached deeply into the dark side of the Force. His eyes glowed Sithly yellow, as he delved into the dark side. He closed his eyes and it would be nearly an hour before he finally opened them again. Once he did so, he

dipped a ornamental cup into the water and then splashed it on the Clone, dousing him with the dark liquid. Then, while moving his hands over the water, he began chanting in ancient Sith tongue. His voice grew in volume and as it did, the ground began to shake, startling Ta'a.

*"Saris...kaleen...siverous...jaaa!"* he chanted again and again. The water in the small pool began swirling until it has created a mini whirlpool. Jaren, still chanting in an ancient language, raised his hands up. The Sith liquid obeyed and lifted from its resting place, staying in perfect form. Jaren's lengthy ritual had allowed the spirit of Darth Sidious to inhabit the liquid and transform it into his essence.

"By the powers of the dark side...take your new form now!" Jaren screamed. The essence darted forth and plunged through the chest of the Clone's body until every last drop of essence had seeped inside its new body. Jaren was beside his father, as he coughed and sputtered. Palpatine opened his eyes and looked around in astonishment. As soon as he got his bearings, he realized what was happening. His son had succeeded...his son had brought him back. An evil smile marred Palpatine's face.

"Hello father," Jaren said.

"My son...you have done well," Palpatine spoke in his cultured voice.

"It's good to be back..." Palpatine cackled, his eyes bleeding yellow with evil...

# History Repeats Itself

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars

AN: Here's chapter 5! Thanks for all the great reviews.

Never Gone III

Chapter 5: History Repeats Itself

It had been a month since Anna's coronation and almost that long since the Skywalker family had returned to Coruscant, minus Anna of course. Padme and Leia had returned to their duties in the Senate and Anakin was working Luke hard in training to prepare him for the trials. That afternoon, Leia was in her office with her mother, Kira, and Mon Mothma. Over the years, Naboo, Alderaan, and Chandrilla had become sort of a triad symbol of peace in the galaxy. Together, they had strived to maintain peace through negotiation and non-violent means. They also headed up the committee to fund programs to help people in need, especially former slaves that were freed. Thanks to the efforts of the triad alliance, poverty and orphaned children numbers were at a historical low.

"Padme, how is Anna doing in her new post?" Mon asked. Padme smiled.

"Very well. Anakin and I are so proud of her. Of course, we're proud of all our babies," Padme replied. Leia rolled her eyes.

"Mom...we're not babies anymore," Leia protested in embarrassment.

"Sorry sweetheart," Padme apologized, with a smile. There was a knock at Leia's office door and she called for them to enter.

"Milady, these just arrived from Hapes," the handmaiden said, as she entered, carrying a large bouquet of flowers. Leia sighed.

"Tara, I thought I told you to send anymore of Prince Isolder's gifts right back where they came from," Leia said.

"I'm sorry milady, but the aide delivering them was very insistent. It also came with this," Tara said, as she handed a velvety ring case to Leia. Hesitantly, Leia opened the case, revealing a very expensive, large, Hapan diamond ring.

"I don't believe this," Leia said, as she read the datapad that came with it.

"What does it say?" Padme asked.

"It says that he will be at the annual freedom celebration tonight and hopes that he may announce our engagement!" Leia exclaimed. Padme took the datapad from her, so that she and Mon could read it.

"He is offering to accept membership to the Republic if Leia marries him," Mon said.

"A political marriage," Padme stated.

"Tara, please sent the ring back and tell his highness I will not be accepting," Leia said.

"But Leia, aren't you going to even consider it?" Mon asked.

"Of course she's not. Leia is not in love with him," Padme replied.

"But he is offering to accept membership to the Republic. Hapes is very wealthy, not to mention equipped with a powerful military. Think of all the good we could to with that kind of funding. We have been trying to get Hapes to join the Republic for over twenty years," Mon said.

"You know how Anakin and I feel about political marriages. We will not allow our daughter to be forced into one," Padme replied.

"They are not the terrible thing you make them out to be. I married the suitor chosen for me and I have grown to love him over the years. Leia, you must consider his generous offer," Mon pressured her.

"My parents have always taught me to follow my heart when it comes to love and marrying Isolder would go against that. I'm sorry, but I cannot accept. I don't want to marry him," Leia replied. Mon looked disappointed.

"Very well," she answered, as she rose. As Mon left, she nodded curtly to Anakin and Luke, who were just arriving. Kira smiled and greeted Luke with a kiss.

"We thought we'd come get you for lunch before we have to get ready for tonight," Anakin said. Padme smiled and kissed him.

"That sounds wonderful, sweetheart," Padme told him.

"Oh no...Isore sent more flowers?" Anakin asked, as he spotted the large bouquet on Leia's desk.

"That's not all he sent," Leia said, as she handed the datapad to her father. The temperature in her office dropped at least ten degrees, as Anakin read it.

"Leia...you aren't considering this, right?" he asked.

"Of course not, daddy. I sent the ring back. But I will have to face him tonight...and all the pressure from the other Senators," Leia replied.

"Well, then you should have an escort," Han said, as he poked his head in the door.

"Excuse me?" Leia asked.

"An escort. I mean...would you allow me to...um, escort you this evening?" he asked nervously. He couldn't believe he'd finally got up

the courage and then he had to ask her right in front of her parents no less!"

"Han, are you asking to be my date?" she asked.

"Well...I...only if you're comfortable with that. It don't hafta to be a date if you don't want it to be," Han stuttered, slipping back into his less than perfect grammar.

*"Man...I am such a loser!"* he silently scolded himself. He had made a complete fool of himself in the space of two minutes. Leia's voice snapped him back to reality and ceased his rambling.

"Han, I'd love for you to be my date this evening," Leia said.

"Oh...okay. Um, great," Han said, as he watched her go out and wait with Luke in the reception area.

"This is just great," Han mumbled.

"Han, what's the matter?" Padme asked.

"Well, let's see. I just made a fool out of myself in front of the two of you, while I attempted to ask out a girl that is way out of my league and who happens to be your daughter. And to top it all off; I don't have a tux," Han panicked.

"Your tux will be ready by five. And you are most certainly not out of her league," Padme replied.

"She's right. I thought that at first when I started dating Padme. Here I was, the former slave dating a high profile Senator. But I discovered that love doesn't know the difference between social classes," Anakin told him.

"But...how are you gonna get my tux by five?" Han asked.

"I am Chancellor...I have my ways," Padme replied mysteriously.

"Now, let's go eat," she replied.

"Yeah, I'm starved," Anakin said.

"You always are," Padme teased, as they left for lunch.

---

The Holonet reporters swarmed around the Chancellor and her family, as they arrived at the Senate building for the annual freedom celebration. Regretfully, Anna was not attending and Anakin and Padme realized how much they missed their youngest. Anakin pushed through the sea of reporters with Han, Leia, Luke, and Kira behind them. Once they arrived, they took at seat at their table with the Kenobi family. After dinner, Padme made the annual speech that was usually given by the Chancellor and then the mingling began. Prince Isolder wasted no time and approached Leia, who was dancing with Han.

"Milady, may I cut in?" he asked.

"Beat it Isore," Han retorted. Leia had to swallow her laugh.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Solo, but I do no appreciate your rudeness," Isolder said haughtily.

"And I don't appreciate your pompous ass harassing the Senator," Han replied.

"It's okay Han. I will humor the prince with one dance," Leia said. Han reluctantly let him cut in, but did not take his eyes off them, as he went off to the side to get a glass on wine.

"You returned the ring," Isolder stated.

"I'm sorry Isolder, but I cannot accept your proposal. I'm not in love with you," Leia tried to explain.

"In my culture, marriage based on love only leads to heartache. We believe in arranging marriages for people who are suited for each other. And you are most definitely suite for the life as a princess and eventually Queen," Isolder said.

"In my family, love is everything and if I married you, I'd be betraying my heart and the values my parents have instilled in me. I cannot accept and I ask that you cease your attempts to woo me," Leia responded. Isolder bowed his head sadly.

"I can give you everything, Leia. A union between Hapes and Naboo would be most beneficial for everyone," Isolder pressured her. Leia struggled to keep her Skywalker temper in check. Anakin, however, made no attempt.

"I believe my daughter has made it quite clear about her feelings," Anakin said, as he approached.

"And you'll stop harassing her...if you know what's good for you," Anakin said dangerously. Isolder looked genuinely frightened and quickly excused himself.

"He's a pain, daddy, but that wasn't very nice," Leia said.

"I don't trust him, Leia. He and his mother are up to something, I'm sure of it. They've never shown this much interest in obtaining membership to the Republic before. My instincts are telling me that something's going on," Anakin said.

"He's annoying, but I'm pretty sure he's harmless," Leia replied.

"Just be careful, princess," Anakin said, as Han approached. Anakin left them and they began swaying slowly to the music.

"That was hilarious! I really through Isore was going to start crying," Han laughed. Leia smacked his arm.

"Han, that's mean," Leia scolded.

"I'm with your dad. I don't trust Prince pretty pants," Han replied.

"You are both paranoid," Leia insisted. Anakin walked off to the side where his wife stood with Obi-Wan and Lea.

"Anakin I think you scared five years off the poor man's life. You didn't have to be so mean," Padme scolded playfully.

"I thought you enjoyed when I was menacing?" he replied, as he smirked at her. Padme returned his smirk, answering his question.

"You were mean. Very unbecoming of a Jedi," Obi-Wan frowned.

"And if it was Jeena he was after?" Anakin asked. Obi-Wan frowned.

"You should have killed the bloody bastard," Obi-Wan answered. Lea gasped and smacked his arm playfully.

"I don't trust him or his mother. And...I have a bad feeling. I just can't put my finger on why," Anakin stated...

---

Leia and Han arrived at her apartment, which was the one she'd grown up in during her mother's time as Senator. Once her mother was elected Chancellor, her parents had moved into an even larger penthouse apartment that was the entire top floor of Republica 500.

"I had a wonderful time tonight, Han," she said.

"Me too...and I was hopin' you did," he replied. There was an awkward silence and Han cleared his throat.

"I'm gonna check with security. Kinda weird not havin' Chewy here, but I'm glad he's looking after Anna," Han mentioned.

"It was really sweet of him to offer to look after her security," Leia replied.

"Yeah...Leia..." Han began.

"Yes?" she asked.

"I...I don't suppose a girl like you'd be interested in going on another date with a guy like me, but I guess I'm askin' anyway," he said. Leia smiled and Han was blown away when she kissed his lips softly.

"Is that a yes?" Han asked, finally finding his voice. She smiled mysteriously at him, deciding to let him figure it out.

"Goodnight Han," she said, as she retired with a dreamy smile. Perhaps, true love wasn't out of her reach at all...

"I think that was a yes," Han mumbled, with a goofy smile, as he set off to check security.

---

"Finally, I thought we'd never get out of there," Luke complained, as they entered Kira's apartment, which was just down the hall from Leia's.

"Well, I enjoyed myself immensely," she replied.

"Yeah, I had fun too. But I always have more fun when we're alone," he replied, as he kissed her lips.

"You know, I have several important meetings tomorrow. I should probably go over a few things first," Kira said, as he placed kisses on her lips.

"Ah...it can wait," Luke protested. She smiled and kissed him quickly, before heading for her home office.

"Fine, but if you take too long, then I'm coming out here and throwing you over my shoulder," Luke teased.

"I'll hold you to that, Jedi," she replied sultrily. Luke went into the bedroom and began undressing, before slipping on a pair of dark

blue sleep shorts. A few minutes later, Kira entered the bedroom sooner than Luke expected.

"I realized that I am completely prepared for the meeting and I really missed you. So...I'm all yours," she said, as he pulled her down into his lap, as he sat on the edge of the bed.

"I love you," he told her.

"I love you too," she replied, as their lips met again. Luke raised his hand and used the Force to turn out the lights...

---

Queen Ta'a Chume sat down next to Palpatine at the holocom.

"She refused his proposal," Ta'a informed him.

"Then it is time to put the first phase of our plan into motion," Palpatine stated. Currently, they were aboard a Hapan cruiser in orbit of Naboo. It had only been a month since his supernatural rebirth, but he had wasted no time in revealing himself to Aron Gunray. Even time had not erased Gunray's hatred for the Naboo and particularly the Skywalker's. Gunray's uncle had been a willing pawn to Palpatine and his nephew was no different. Palpatine pressed the comm button.

"You may begin your invasion," Palpatine said. Several Neimodian war ships descended to the planet's surface...

---

Explosions and blaster fire rained through Theed, as a massive droid army invaded the peaceful world. The Nabooan military, established by Padme fifteen years ago, stood proudly defending their sacred palace. The Gungan army joined them, but the massive droid numbers were overwhelming. Handmaiden Karre, chosen for her resemblance to Anna, ran through the palace to the Queen's chambers. Her orders from the captain of the guard were ringing in her ears. Aron Gunray himself was making his way to the palace and

the Queen was to be hidden, for he was intent on murdering the daughter of Skywalker and Amidala. Now, Karre would become her decoy and would be the one to be captured. It was at that moment that Karre realized she would die on this night. But it was her duty and she was proud to die for her young Queen. Once she arrived in the Queen's chambers, the handmaidens were already disguising the Queen in the plain clothes of a handmaiden.

"I will not leave the palace! Or my people!" Anna protested.

"Aron Gunray holds a terrible grudge against your family and we will not let you perish because of his anger," Karre told her, as the other handmaidens swarmed around her to outfit her as the Queen.

"Chewbacca, you must see to Queen Erilana's safety," Karre charged. Chewy rawled affirmatively.

"I can't leave! My father will be here soon and make this right!" Anna protested.

"Your father is just now finding out about this. It will be four hours before he can get here," Karre replied.

"Get her out of here now, Chewbacca," Karre yelled, as her face was painted.

"I'm not going!" Anna yelled stubbornly, as she ignited her sapphire blade.

"I'll defend my palace to the last breath," Anna said, as she rushed out into the hall. Chewy rawled and ran after her. The Wookie followed her, as she sliced through the droids that were now crawling through the hallways. Chewy helped her fight and then would pull her from the battle when it got too dangerous for her...whether she liked it or not.

---

*"Daddy!!!!"*

Anakin sat up in bed with a start, disrupting his wife, who was snuggled against him. His body was covered in sweat and his chest heaved in air.

"Ani...what is it?" Padme asked sleepily.

"Anna...something's terribly wrong," he said, the anguish evident in his voice. He got out of bed and began throwing his clothes on. Padme grabbed her robe, as there was suddenly an urgent knocking at their bedroom door. Padme opened the door to find Leia's tear stained face. Behind her, Han, Luke, Kira, Dorme, Typho, and the Kenobi family stood.

"Leia...what's going on?" she asked.

"Naboo's been invaded," Leia cried, as she fell into her mother's arms.

"Neimodian droids have overwhelmed the military," Luke said.

"Aron Gunray has captured the palace," Obi-Wan stated sadly.

"They've captured the Queen," Leia cried.

"Hey, I know Chewy will take care of her," Han offered his comfort.

"Han is right and it is likely that Gunray has captured Anna's decoy. I'm sure Chewy is hiding her and she'll be okay until we get there," Anakin said, as he called his light saber to his hand with the Force.

"I'm coming with you," Padme stated, as she grabbed a familiar white battle outfit from the drawer.

"Me too," Leia stated.

"Padme, I think you should both stay here," Anakin replied.

"She's my daughter too and our people are under attack again. If you leave me behind, I'll just follow you in another ship," Anakin sighed.

"Fine, let's go," he said, knowing it was pointless to argue with her. Anakin and Padme were followed by Luke, Leia, Han, Obi-Wan, Jeena, and Jayden. Only Kira and Lea stayed behind. Less than five minutes later, they watched the Sapphire Angel burst through the sky, as it left Coruscant at maximum speed.

"Be safe...all of you..." Lea said quietly, as she continued to watch the night sky.

# Fallen Hero

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars.

AN: Here's chapter 6! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Forever Destined

Chapter 6: Fallen Hero

Anna and Chewy peered into the throne room from behind a pillar. Aron Gunray sneered at the decoy he thought was the Queen. Anna gasped, as he drew a vibro blade.

"Your mother and father have caused me a great deal of trouble over the years and now I will enjoy watching them mourn their youngest daughter. I will relish the looks on their faces, as they cradle your dead corpse and a feeling of sheer agony overtakes them," Gunray nodded to his guards and blaster fire ran out, as the three handmaidens with her were executed in cold blood. Anna's scream was muffled, as Chewy covered her mouth with his hand.

"You are about to die, yet you say nothing. I see the fear in your eyes though," Gunray said, as he walked around behind her. He grabbed the Queen by the hair and pulled her head back, while placing the blade at her throat.

"I'll make sure to tell your parents you suffered before you died," Gunray whispered to her, as he swiped the blade along her throat. The decoy Queen screamed, as her throat was slit viciously slow, depriving her of a quick death. Gunray dropped the dead woman to the floor and left her to lay in a pool of her own blood. Anna's face was buried in Chewy's fur, as she sobbed uncontrollably.

"Why...why did he have...to kill them," Anna sobbed. Chewy rocked her slowly to comfort her. Anna gripped her light saber and stood up.

"I have to stop him, Chewy," Anna said. Chewy shook his head no.

"I'm sorry...I have to..." Anna said, as she ran into the throne room and cut down two droids.

"A Jedi...stop her!" Gunray yelled angrily. His men began shooting at her, but she blocked them skillfully. Anna speared one of the Neimodians through the chest, but another kicked her in the back. The guard laughed, as she fell forward, but his amusement quickly faded when an angry Wookie wrapped his hand around the man's neck, snapping it like a twig. But Aron Gunray only laughed at their fruitless efforts. As Anna stood up, she noticed that they were now surrounded by battle droids and droidekas. Two guards with plasma charged pikes approached her and Chewy rawled angrily.

"Call off your beast if you wish for him to remain alive," Gunray snarled. Anna turned to Chewy and held him back. It was then that Gunray spied the medallion around her neck. He looked down at the dead Queen and then up at the girl again.

"A decoy..." Gunray snarled.

"Bring her to me! She is the real Queen!" Gunray spat, as he kicked the bloodied body of the decoy aside. Chewy rawled angrily, as they took Anna and he struggled with the stun cuffs that were placed on him.

"You're a monster! You killed my friends and I'm going to make sure you pay for it!" Anna screamed, as she was brought before Gunray.

"Yes...you are the daughter of Skywalker and Amidala. The resemblance is evident," Gunray said, as he drew the crimson stained blade.

"You're about to join your friends, my young Queen," Gunray sneered...

Anakin ran down the ramp of the sapphire angel and was quickly followed by everyone else. Anakin looked at Han, Luke, Jeena, and Jayden.

"Do you guys understand the mission?" Anakin asked. They nodded.

"Don't worry, we'll blast that control station to bits with the Falcon," Han replied.

"Thanks Han. May the Force be with you all," Anakin said, as the four boarded the Falcon. Anakin turned to Obi-Wan.

"Anna's in trouble. We need to get to the throne room," Anakin said. He heard Padme and Leia cock their blasters.

"Let's go," Padme said.

"Angel, I really think you and Leia should stay here," he tried to reason with her.

"And I think we don't have time to argue about this. She's my baby too...now let's go!" Padme ordered, as she and Leia ran into the corridor and began discharging their blasters on any droids in sight. Anakin ignited his blade and followed them into the fray.

"Blast! I'm getting too old for this," Obi-Wan griped, as he ignited his own blade and followed Anakin...

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Anna tensed, as Gunray pressed the tip of his blade under her chin.

"Such loyalty your decoy had, as she was willing to die for you," Gunray sneered. A tear slipped down Anna's cheek.

"Her death will be in vain. However, since you are about to join her. Is there anything you'd like me to tell your parents when I hand them your dead, bloodied corpse!" Gunray snarled, as he drew the blade back, aiming it for her heart. Suddenly, Gunray cried out in pain, as it

felt like his hand was being crushed. The blade was pulled from his hand and one of his guards screamed, as the blade speared him in the chest. Blaster fire rang out, taking out the battle droids. The other guard fell to Obi-Wan's light saber and Chewy was freed. The droidekas kept their shields up, blocking Padme's blaster fire. Anakin stared intently at them and his eyes flashed with the light of the Force. A shockwave of Force power erupted from his hand and sliced through the droids shields like nothing. His powers shattered them into pieces. Gunray backed away in fright, as Anakin approached. He hugged Anna tightly and kissed her hair.

"Daddy..." she sobbed. He pulled back and looked at his little girl.

"Everything's going to be okay," he told her. Padme was by his side in an instant and pulled their daughter into her arms.

"Oh mom...he killed them...my friends..." Anna sobbed.

"I'm so sorry baby," Padme said, as she rocked her crying daughter. Anakin glared at Gunray, who cowered before his towering form. Suddenly, his comlink chimed. Without breaking his fixated glare, he brought the device to his lips.

"Skywalker," he answered.

"Dad, we've got a problem up here! There's a shield surrounding the control ship! We think it's being operated from Naboo," Luke said.

"I'll find the shield and get it down. Wait for my signal," Anakin answered, as he picked Gunray up and slammed his against the wall.

"Where is the shield being operated from?!" Anakin demanded.

"Like I would tell you...Jedi scum!" Gunray spat. Anakin growled and put his palm to Gunray's forehead.

"I don't have time to deal with you," Anakin said. Gunray held his head and screamed in pain, as Anakin probed his mind and extracted the information needed. He hauled Gunray off his feet and tossed him to Obi-Wan.

"It's being operated from the control room down in the bowels of the palace. I'm going to shut it down," Anakin said.

"Ani, be careful!" Padme called. He pressed a quick kiss to her lips, before he left in a sprint.

---

In the vacant control room, two cloaked figures stood over the abyss, listening to the screams of the damned souls.

"I brought the thing you asked me to retrieve from the Temple on Korriban," Jaren said, as he handed the black case to his father.

"Excellent, my son," Palpatine answered, as he opened it. Jaren peered in and saw six shiny black orbs.

"What are those, father?" he asked.

"These, my son, will give substance to a demon of their choosing. Each will absorb a spirit and then disappear into the elements. Then, our new warriors will rise when they see fit and do my bidding," Palpatine said.

"The elements?" Jaren asked.

"Yes...there will be the fire demon, the ice demon, the water demon, the ground demon, the lightning demon, and...the wind demon," Palpatine replied.

"Will we know which spirits will be selected?" Jaren asked.

"No...but their identities matter not, for their elements will grant them incredible power. Only the Chosen One's light can kill them,"

Palpatine said.

"Then we must eliminate him," Jaren replied.

"Do not worry, my son. Everything is going according to plan," Palpatine said, as he waved his hand over the orbs and began chanting in the ancient Sith tongue. The orbs glowed and absorbed their hosts from the abyss. Finally, once the process was finished, the orbs exploded, leaving blackened dust behind.

"The first phase is complete," Palpatine announced.

"I sense the Chosen One approaching," Jaren replied.

"Then...we begin phase two..." Palpatine cackled.

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Anakin sprinted into the control room and noticed the force field had been deactivated by blaster fire. He went to the controls and found the program that was operating the shield with the palace's satellite. His fingers flew over the console and he cursed, seeing that the files were encrypted. He tore open then control panel and ignited his light saber. He cut through the wires and the words "shield deactivated" flashed on the screen. Anakin smirked and raised his comlink to his lips.

"The shield is down Luke," Anakin said.

"Great dad, thanks. We'll blow this thing to bits and be back in no time!" Luke called. Anakin pocketed his comlink and suddenly felt a dark presence. He turned and gazed around the room.

"I know you're here...show yourself..." Anakin called. Suddenly, a cloaked figure dropped from the ceiling beams and stood, facing Skywalker. The person's head was covered by the cowl and Anakin gripped his light saber.

"Who are you?!" Anakin demanded. The figure laughed evilly.

"I suppose you could say...I'm a ghost from your past, Chosen One," the voice rasped. Anakin recognized the raspy voice immediately, but didn't believe it. The figure cackled, as he dropped his hood.

"Yes Chosen One, it is me..." Sidious sneered.

"This is impossible!" Anakin exclaimed.

"Not at all...thanks to my son..." Palpatine replied, as he raised his saber. That was Jaren's signal.

"Your son?" Anakin questioned. Suddenly, a figure dropped behind him and the clocked person ignited their blade. Anakin evaded the Sith's thrust and then sensed Palpatine advancing on him. Anakin's eyes glowed, as he called on the power of the Force. He glowed with its power.

You are powerful, but you'll find I've learned a few things, while I've been rotting in hell for the last twenty years. It's time I have my revenge on you for putting me there!" Palpatine yelled, as Force lightning erupted from his fingertips. But this was a strange red lightning and far more powerful than normal blue Force lightning. Anakin screamed in agony, as the lightning broke through his shield and seared through him. His saber fell from his hand and sensed danger behind him. Jaren drew his saber back and thrust forward, aiming for Anakin's heart. Anakin shifted out of the way, but not enough, as the saber was impaled through his abdomen instead of his heart. Palpatine cackled and ceased his lightning attack. Jaren viciously extracted his saber from the Chosen One. Anakin's vision swam and blackness invaded his awareness. The Chosen One slumped to his knees and landed on the cold durasteel floor with a hard thud.

"Our mission is accomplished, we must go before we are discovered," Palpatine said.

"Are you sure he's dead?" Jaren asked.

"If he's not, he soon will be. Come..." Palpatine ordered. The two Sith slipped into the shadows of the dimly lit corridor and disappeared...

---

A feeling of sheer dread filled Padme's heart. Something was terribly wrong.

"Anakin..." she said, as she took off running.

"Padme...wait!" Obi-Wan cried, as he shoved Gunray to Chewy.

"Make sure he doesn't go anywhere," Obi-Wan said, as he took off running after Padme.

"Something's wrong with daddy," Anna said, as a few tears slipped down her cheeks. Padme ran as fast as her legs would carry her. Her panic and fear only increased, as she saw her husband lying unconscious in the control room ahead of her. She finally reached him and screamed, as she saw the singed, gaping hole in his abdomen.

"OBI-WAN, HURRY!" Padme screamed.

"Anakin...oh Gods. You can't leave me...you can't!" Padme sobbed. Obi-Wan knelt down beside her and tore Anakin's shirt open to examine the wound.

"Light saber wound," Obi-Wan said. Padme's eyes widened.

"What? How is that possible?" Padme asked.

"We need a stretcher down here now!" Obi-Wan roared into his comlink.

"I think it means the Sith aren't as extinct as we'd like them to be. He's been hit with some extremely powerful Force lightning," Obi-Wan said gravely.

"Obi-Wan...he's going to live, right?" she asked.

"I won't lie to you, Padme. He's barely hanging on by a thread right now," Obi-Wan replied softly, as tears pricked his own eyes. Padme shook her head, as the tears came harder.

"No...no...I won't lose you Anakin! You have to hang on...for me and our...children. Please Ani...please don't leave me..." Padme sobbed. Obi-Wan pulled her out of the way when the medics arrived and the two of them ran behind the medics, as they rushed Anakin to the emergency med bay.

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Anna and Leia huddled around their mother, as they sobbed quietly together in the waiting room. They'd been there for a few hours now and just received word that the Millennium Falcon had destroyed the control ship and they were on their way back. Obi-Wan stood behind them, waiting for any news from the Healers. Suddenly, Luke burst into the room, followed closely by Han, Jeena, and Jayden.

"Mom..." he said, choking back a sob.

"Oh Luke," Padme cried, as her son hugged her tightly.

"Mom, what happened?" Luke asked. Padme looked back at Obi-Wan.

"Your father was down in the control room. He sustained a light saber wound to the abdomen and was hit with a powerful amount of Force lightning," Obi-Wan answered.

"But the Sith are supposed to be dead!" Luke exclaimed.

"Or so we thought. It is clear that there are a couple Sith out there again...and this whole invasion could have simply been a set up to murder your father," Obi-Wan replied.

"A couple? You think there's more than one?" Luke asked.

"There's always two. Dooku broke that rule years ago...but even he only had one top apprentice. The Sith will never be above training assassins and minions to do their bidding. But there will always be two...Master and Apprentice. And this time, we have no clue to the identity of either. We can only hope Anakin pulls through and can tell us who did this to him," Obi-Wan replied, as he put his arms around both his children.

"Well, this is Anakin we're talkin' about. Of course he's gonna pull through," Han said. Leia looked at him and he smiled softly

"He's gonna pull through," he told her. She approached him and hugged him tightly. Han wrapped his arms around her petite waist and hugged her back. Suddenly, a healer came into the waiting room and drew everyone's attention.

"Healer Jansen, is my husband okay?" Padme asked.

"Master Skywalker made it through surgery. The dermal regenerators have repaired the damaged tissue to his affected internal organs and he is stable," Healer Jansen reported. Padme smiled, as Luke and Anna hugged her tightly. But when she noticed the healer's frown, her smile quickly faded.

"What's wrong?" she asked.

"Milady, while your husband's condition is stable...I'm afraid he has slipped into a comatose state," he replied.

"A coma?" Leia questioned.

"Yes, I am afraid so," he answered.

"Well...Ani just needs time to rest. He'll wake up soon...I know he will," Padme replied.

"Milady, I am afraid that his chances of regaining consciousness are slim at best. His pupils...are unresponsive to light and there is little to

no brain activity," the healer reported.

"So, what are you saying? That we should just give up on him! My husband is fighting and he will wake up!" Padme yelled.

"I am just saying that you all may need to prepare for the possibility that he may never wake up. You may need to prepare for the possibility that he may never wake up. You may need to prepare yourselves to make some very difficult decisions on whether or not to prolong his life if there is no chance of him coming back. Based on his condition...I don't see him waking up as even a remote possibility. I'm sorry," the healer said.

"So...what? We're just supposed to start planning a funeral, because you say so! You don't know my dad!" Luke yelled.

"My son is right. Anakin is no ordinary person and it is not a question of if he will wake up, but when. Until then, he will receive the absolute best care around the clock. Then, in a few days, he will be transported back to Coruscant with me where he will receive care from the Jedi healers, for they will know how to help him best. And you will not speak of my husband like he is already dead in front of my children again! Is this clear?" Padme questioned.

"Y...yes Chancellor," the healer responded nervously.

"Now...can we see him?" Padme asked, softening her tone.

"Yes...but I must say just one at a time for tonight," he replied.

"You go first mom. He needs to hear your voice," Luke said. Padme hugged each of her kids and slowly walked down the hall to Anakin's room.

Padme stared at her husband, as he lay on a bed. She'd never seen him so pale or still. But she was certain of one thing; she would never give up hope that he would make a full recovery. She came

beside him and lifted his hand to her lips. She sat down beside him and brushed her fingers through his thick curls.

"Oh my love..." she cried, as she kissed his forehead.

"That healer doesn't know what he's talking about. He doesn't know you and how you've always promised to come back to me, no matter what," she said, as she softly stroked his cheek.

"I'm going to take really good care of you, so you can heal and wake up very soon," she told him.

"Our love is so strong and there is nothing we can't get through. I don't know if you can feel my touch, but I know you can hear my voice. Come back to me soon, my love. I'll be right here waiting for you to open those beautiful blue eyes," Padme said, as she kissed his still lips softly. She curled up beside him on the bed and ran her fingers through his hair, while whispering comforting words in his ear. She stayed there for several moments, as long as she was allowed to before she left so her children could each visit their father as well...

# Perilous Times

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars.

AN: Here's chapter 6! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Forever Destined

Chapter 7: Perilous Times

It had been a week since the invasion on Naboo and it had truly been a week from Sith hell for all involved. Aron Gunray was arrested and incarcerated for the attack. Once he realized the Sith did not intend to help him gain his freedom, he planned to tell the Jedi what he knew in hopes of striking a deal. The morning he was scheduled to make his confession, he was found dead in his cell, hanging from a noose. Everything about it pointed to suicide, but Obi-Wan was almost certain he was murdered.

Three days after the attack, a memorial service was held by the Queen to honor those who died in the invasion. The Naboo people rallied around their Queen, for she had lost friends too. And now, her own father was in a coma. The fact that the galaxy's hero had fallen to a supposed new Sith threat had struck fear into the hearts of people all across the galaxy. The Skywalker family was plagued even more heavily than usual by the Holonet. It was all they could talk about and they exploited every angle of the story, which in turn created absurd and untrue theories and conclusions. Two days after the Memorial service, Padme, Leia, Luke, Han, Obi-Wan, Jayden, and Jeena returned to Coruscant. Anakin was transported with them and to some quarters in the Temple. The quarters had an extra bedroom, a fresher, a kitchen and a living area. Padme's things had already been moved into the room, for she refused to go back to her empty apartment without her husband. Luke and Leia thought it was the best option for their mother too. On the outside, Padme kept up a strong facade, but to those who knew her well, they could see that

she was slowly crumbling on the inside. Senate sessions were long and brutal. She came home to the Temple exhausted and usually fell asleep at her husband's bedside. Anakin had a lot of visitors everyday. Luke, Leia, Han, and Obi-Wan being the most frequent. Anna called everyday and the Jedi healers cared for him around the clock, often performing various healing rituals on him. But so far, his condition remained unchanged. However, it did nothing to discourage the Skywalker family and they remained vigilant in the hope that he would soon awaken.

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The Coruscant Galactic Marketplace bustled with the usual busy morning activity. But the normalness of the people's everyday lives was about to be drastically interrupted. The busy marketplace was suddenly fulled with terror, as the ground underneath their feet shook violently. Some screamed and pointed to what looked like a creature burrowing underground. Screams of horror filled the air, as the first victim was claimed. A young woman was yanked underground. A few seconds later, the body resurfaced...dead. The woman had died with a look of terror stricken on her features. The creature moved on, claiming everyone in its path. The victim's skin was turned gray, like the life and light had been sucked out of them. People screamed and ran away, hoping to escape the horrible creature. It did not take long for word of these killings to reach the Temple.

Obi-Wan led his team through the now deserted marketplace. Behind him was Luke, Jeena, Kit Fisto, Aayla Secura, Whie Malreaux, Bultar Swan and five more senior padawans. Obi-Wan knelt down beside one of the victims to examine her.

"Uncle...what could have done this?" Luke asked.

"I don't know Luke...but certainly no creature I've ever seen or heard of," Obi-Wan replied.

"Can you determine the cause of death?" Kit asked.

"Without an autopsy, I would guess asphyxiation. Either they were choked or suffocated. We won't know for sure until their throats and lungs can be examined," Obi-Wan answered, even though that still did not explain the strange gray color to their skin. Suddenly, the ground rumbled under them, indicating the creature was near. Twelve snap-hissing sounds could be heard, as the team of Jedi ignited their multi-colored blades. In an instant, before anyone could reach them, two of the padawans were sucked underground.

"It got Corraine and Rand!" Jeena yelled. A few moments later, the two padawans were plunged up through the ground. Their skin was gray as stone and they had clearly been choked to death.

"This is madness," Kit said, with a shaky voice, as he examined the dead padawans. Suddenly, rock and duracrete flew everywhere, as the monster responsible surfaced at last.

"It can't be..." Aayla uttered.

"That's impossible..." Kit added.

"Darth Malina..." Obi-Wan stated in shocked tone. The former Twi'lek Sith was now completely gray, except her eyes, which were blood red. She snarled and barred her teeth, which looked like those that a ferocious Nexu would have.

"A Sith demon..." Obi-Wan said.

"But I thought you said Sith demons couldn't physically harm anyone," Luke replied.

"They can't unless they are given substance and released by a Sith Lord. Sith demons can find substance in the elements if the Sith releasing them wishes it so. Malina has found her substance in the ground. I bet you anything that her victim's lungs are filled with rock and dirt," Obi-Wan replied.

"How do we defeat her?" Bultar asked. Obi-Wan looked very uncomfortable with that question.

"Sith demons are nearly immortal. Only the pure power of the light side of the Force can banish them back to hell," Obi-Wan replied.

"You mean dad," Luke replied.

"Yes...I am afraid only Anakin possesses the needed power," Obi-Wan said gravely.

"There has to be another way!" Aayla cried.

"None that I know of. I've only told you what I've read in the archives. Master Yoda may know more," Obi-Wan replied. Malina stared at them and growled. The ground shook and the duracrete beneath them became unsettled.

"What is she doing?!" Jeena asked. Her question was answered, however, as several rock type creatures rose from the ground beside her.

"What...what are those?" Bultar asked.

"Wraiths...a creature of her own creation," Obi-Wan said. It was all starting to make sense to Obi-Wan. Naboo had been invaded for the sole purpose of attempting to murder Anakin and creating the Sith demons. Whoever this new Sith Lord was; one thing was certain. He or she was extremely powerful...

"The Wraiths can be killed and we must destroy them before more lives can be taken!" Obi-Wan called. The team of Jedi raised their humming blades, as the creatures advanced on them. The twelve light sabers became a whirl of light, as the Jedi defended themselves against the oncoming creatures. The creatures crumbled and broke apart upon contact with a light saber. They were strong, but fortunately not very smart. Bultar did an aerial flip and went after the demon.

"Bultar...no!" Aayla called. Bultar didn't listen, however and shoved her saber through Malina's abdomen. Malina snarled down at her, unaffected by the attack. Bultar withdrew her blade and watched in horror, as the gaping hole in her stomach closed up.

"Bultar, look out!" Obi-Wan cried. But it was too late. Malina wrapped her lekku around Bultar's neck and stared into her eyes with her blood red stare. Bultar gasped for air, but could get none. Slowly, her skin turned gray, as she was choked and suffocated to death. Malina dropped the dead body and kicked it away. She snarled at the other Jedi with a ferocious growl, barring her sharp fangs.

"Jedi...slime!" she snarled. The Jedi continued to fight her wraiths and eventually destroyed them all. Luke stood tall and stared at Malina. Unknowingly to him, a light flashed through his eyes that simply made Malina cower away from him.

"You won't kill anymore of my friends!" Luke cried. Malina snarled at him, turning her eyes away from his light, which burned at her cornea's.

"This...is not over...Jedi scum!" she growled, as she dove underground and disappeared. The light left Luke, leaving him stunned.

"Luke...what happened?" Obi-Wan asked.

"I...don't know. But it felt like dad was here...like he was helping me..." Luke said. Obi-Wan smiled.

"Well, it seems like Anakin is fighting to come back to us with everything he can," Obi-Wan replied.

"Do you really believe that it means he's still here and not...gone?" Luke asked.

"Luke, if your father was dead, then he couldn't very well lend you his powers and that's exactly what happened here. He is in a coma,

but no where near dead," Obi-Wan told him.

"Come on, we need to return to the Temple. I'll contact the coroner's office to have a team come and collect the dead citizens. We'll take our own back for autopsies and proper funerals," Obi-Wan said, as the nine remaining Jed returned to the Temple with their fallen comrades.

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Padme shoved her way through the sea of Holonet reporters outside her office. She had just come from a particularly brutal Senate session, where they had discussed the happenings in the Galactic Marketplace that morning. It was early evening and she was exhausted. She suppressed a growl of frustration, as her comm buzzed.

"Yes Sache?" she answered.

"I'm terribly sorry milady, but Prince Isolder is here to see you," Sache said.

"Please tell him to schedule an appointment at a different time. Thank you," Padme replied.

"I did milady, but he is insisting on seeing you," she answered. Padme was ready to yank her hair out.

"Very well, send him in," Padme replied. A few moments later, Prince Isolder entered and bowed to her.

"I apologize for the lateness of the hour, your majesty, but I have an urgent matter I need to discuss with you," Isolder said. Padme looked annoyed.

"Very well. Please sit," Padme offered. He did so.

"Chancellor, I will get straight to the point. The Republic is facing a perilous situation and I am ready to offer the assistance and

protection of the Hapan military," Isolder said. Padme already didn't like where this was going.

"And what would you require in return from me?" Padme asked.

"Why, Leia's hand in marriage, of course," he replied.

"Thank you Prince Isolder, but I do not believe we will be needing your services. Please kindly see yourself out," Padme said sternly.

"Oh, but many of your colleagues see my request as a small price to pay for the safety of the people. I daresay you may be outvoted if this matter is decided upon in the Senate. Senator Mothma is already writing the proposal and is set to present it to Leia in the morning," Isolder said. Padme felt a flash of betrayal ripple through her.

"Leia will be treated like a Queen and I will take very good care of her. This is in the best interest of everyone," Isolder said. Padme stalked up to him and glared up at him.

"If you pursue this avenue, you'll live to regret it. If you force my daughter into this marriage, my husband will rip you apart when he wakes up," Padme said fiercely.

"If he wakes up, your majesty," Isolder replied smugly. Padme smirked.

"Well, until he does, you might want to steer clear of Luke. He is his father's son, after all. Good evening, your highness," Padme spat the last work, as she left in a hurry. She had to talk to Leia immediately.

---

Leia and Han sat at Anakin's bedside, talking to him.

"You think he can hear us?" Leia asked.

"Sure he can. He's still here. He's just resting," Han assured her, though he had no idea if that was really the case.

"I hope so. I really miss him and mom is falling apart," Leia said.

"We all miss him. And your mom is strong. She'll never give up hope on your dad," Han told her, as he took her hand and squeezed in comfortingly. Leia smiled.

"Thanks Han," Leia said, as she kissed his cheek. They heard the door open and saw Padme come in.

"Mom...are you okay?" Leia asked, seeing the look of distraught on her mother's face.

"Leia...I'm glad you're here. There's something we need to talk about," Padme said, as she sat down on the sofa.

"Do you want me to leave?" Han asked.

"No Han, please stay," Padme replied. Han and Leia sat down across from her.

"Prince Isolder came to see me and I thought I'd better tell you about it before you see it on the Holonet," Padme began.

"What did he want?" Leia asked.

"He has announced that he will lend the Republic the help of the Hapan military...if you accept his marriage proposal. It's probably all over the Holonet by now and you will probably receive a lot of pressure, but you do *not* have to accept. I am going to fight this with everything I can," Padme promised. Leia sat quietly, stunned that Isolder was actually going to try and capitalize on the Republic's plight by forcing her to marry him. She knew she would be pressured to marry him until she finally gave in. But she would fight it until she no longer could.

"I know you will, mom," she answered.

"Miss Padme, can they really force Leia into this marriage?" Han asked. Padme sighed deeply.

"Senator Mothma, whom I will be having very harsh words with in the morning, has already written the proposal. If Leia refuses Isolder's offer, she will go about getting everyone she can in the Senate to sign. The pressure will be unbearable...but we will fight this together. And when Ani wakes up, he'll make everything better..." Padme replied.

"Thank you mom. I'm not feeling so well. Han, can you take me home?" Leia asked. He nodded.

"I love you Leia," Padme said.

"I love you too mom," she replied, as she and Han left. Padme sighed and let her hair down, as she approached her husband's bedside. She sat on the bed beside him and stroked his hair and cheek.

"Oh Ani...we need you..." she cried, as she collapsed against his chest and began to cry almost uncontrollably.

---

Leia and Han arrived home at her apartment some time later. Leia had been in a daze the whole way, silently contemplating what she had just learned

"Leia...are you okay?" Han asked.

"Um...I'm fine," she forced a smile. She stumbled slightly, but Han caught her before she could fall.

"You don't seem fine..." he replied.

"Okay, I'm not fine. My father is in a coma and I have to marry someone I don't love," Leia said, as tears welled in her eyes. Han hugged her tightly.

"We'll figure this out. I ain't goin' anywhere and no dumb prince is gonna get his paws on you as long as I'm around," Han promised.

"You mean that? You'd really defy the entire Republic for me?" she asked.

"Course I would," he replied softly. Slowly, their lips met in a soft kiss. Leia wrapped her arms around his neck, as their lips moved slowly over each other's. The passion between them grew slowly and Han traced his tongue softly along her bottom lip. Leia opened her mouth, allowing him in. Their tongues glided together, deepening the kiss. When they finally broke the kiss, it left them breathless. They stared into each other's eyes for what seemed like forever. Finally, Leia broke their gaze and laid her head against Han's shoulder. He was content holding her and they stayed like that for a long while...

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Jaren's boots sounded heavily on the durasteel floor of his father's new massive ship, in which he was calling a Star Destroyer. Palpatine sat in his throne, swirling a glass of fine Nabooan red wine.

"Father, our first demon has attacked. She killed thirty people and three Jedi in her initial attack," Jaren smirked.

"Excellent. The Senate is in uproar already and the Republic is already crumbling without their beloved Chosen One," Palpatine replied.

"Yes, but we may have a small problem. Our ground demon was scared off by the Skywalker boy. She was mumbling something about the light," Jaren reported.

"The boy may pose a slight problem, but his powers are no where near as developed as his father's. He will be at most a nuisance and our stronger demons will be able to handle him," Palpatine replied.

"Isolder has made his move and plans to force Leia to marry him. But I don't understand the significance of his move. Why do we need

the girl?" Jaren asked.

"Can you think of a better hostage to hold against the Chancellor when the time comes for us to take over? Amidala will willingly step down from her post rather than to see her daughter harmed. Plus...I have other plans for young Leia as well. But we need not discuss these now," Palpatine replied. Jaren was curious as to what he meant, but had learned fast that his father would only tell him what he wanted him to know.

"What of our other project?" Palpatine asked.

"It is already under construction as we speak. It won't be long until we have the power to take the galaxy by force," Jaren replied.

"Excellent my son, you have done well. Everything is falling into place," Palpatine cackled.

"But father, what if the Chosen One does regain consciousness?" Jaren asked.

"I've heard the reports and the chances of that are slim to none. Besides, even if he does manage to in a few months time, it will be much too late for him to do anything about it," Palpatine replied. Jaren smirked and nodded.

---

*Padme walked through the beautiful moonlit garden. She didn't know where she was or how she had got there, but it was a breathtaking place. She looked down and found her attire to be a flowing, airy white dress that hugged her curves perfectly. Her hair cascaded around her in soft ringlets and the grass tickled her bare feet.*

*"Are you an angel..." Her heart leapt at the deep, husky voice that sounded around her. She turned to the fountain...and there he was.*

*"Anakin..." she breathed. He wore his Jedi uniform like he always did and smiled at her.*

*"Anakin!" she cried, as she ran into his arms. He spun her around in his arms and their lips collided in a frenzy of passion. Padme wrapped her arms tightly around his neck and began to cry softly against his chest.*

*"Please don't cry, angel," he said.*

*"Oh Ani...I miss you so much. I know this is just a dream...but it feels so real..." she cried.*

*"It is a dream...but it's real too, my love," he told her.*

*"I...I don't understand," she replied.*

*"I'm stuck in this place between life and death. I am fighting to come back, but I suppose the Force has not seen fit to bring me back yet. You're able to be here with me in your dreams, because we can do anything we desire in our dreams. I will come back to you when I can, but until then, I need you to be strong," he said, as he caressed her cheek.*

*"I love you...and I need you so much," she cried.*

*"I know and I need you. That's why you're here. I get stronger everyday, because of you. That's why I need you to stay strong and take care of yourself," he told her.*

*"I will...I'll do anything to get you back..." she replied. She was in heaven, as he pressed his lips to hers again. Their lips met again and again, the passion between them burning brightly as ever. Anakin laid her down on the blanket that seemed to appear out of no where.*

*"Ani...can we...here?" she asked. He smiled at her.*

*"It's your dream, angel," he replied. She smiled and wrapped arms around his neck, before pulling him back down. And her dream came true...*

# Ghost of the Past

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars.

AN: Here's chapter 8! Thanks for all the great reviews. I'm glad everyone's enjoying the story.

Never Gone III

Chapter 8: Ghost of the Past

*Padme sighed in contentment, as she laid against his bare chest.*

*"I don't know how this can be a dream, because it certainly felt real," she said, as her fingers skated over his defined pectorals.*

*"It was sort of real in a way I guess. You really are here with me, even if it is in your dreams," he replied, as he kissed her forehead. She kissed him deeply, sliding her tongue along his own. They suddenly noticed it was becoming hazy around them.*

*"What's happening?" she asked.*

*"I think you're waking up," he replied.*

*"I don't want to leave you," she said.*

*"I know, but unfortunately, you must. I love you angel," he told her.*

*"I love you too Ani," she replied, as she faded from the dream state.*

---

Padme woke up and found that she had cried herself to sleep at her husband's bedside. But she remembered the dream vividly. She could still feel his arms around her and his lips on her own. She looked down at his still form and smoothed her fingers through his hair.

"I know you'll come back to me..." she said, as she kissed his cheek. Then, she proceeded to the fresher to clean up. She had what would be a very unpleasant meeting with Mon Mothma to attend to.

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Leia opened the door, as it chimed again and was not surprised to see Mon Mothma behind it.

"Good morning Leia. May I come in?" Mon asked. Her mother had taught her to always be polite to her colleagues even when they didn't deserve it. Her father had taught her not to take Sith from anyone. And right now, she really wanted to be her father's daughter and slam the door in Mon's face. But her good manners overruled that urge and she wordlessly let the woman in.

"I assume your mother has told you about Isolder's offer and my proposal," Mon began.

"Yes and Skywalker's do not take kindly to anyone who betrays them," Leia answered.

"I'm sorry you see it that way," Mon replied.

"How else am I supposed to see it? You are forcing me into a loveless marriage," Leia answered.

"And I wish I did not have to! But this is in the best interest of the Republic. The lives of thousands hang in the balance, yet you selfishly refuse to do what you can to protect them.

"How dare you accuse my daughter of being selfish!" Padme cried, as she emerged from the veranda where her speeder was parked.

"I have held you in high esteem as a trusted friend for years, but at the first sign of trouble, you are ready to sacrifice my daughter's happiness for an army! Need I remind you that the last army the Republic had almost murdered the Jedi! Do you really think an army

can protect us from the power of the Sith?! If you do, then you have been horribly misguided by our friend Prince Isolder!" Padme yelled.

"Would you rather I mope around, pining after a comatose man like you are?" Mon retorted.

"My husband will come back to us! He is the only one who can destroy the Sith and this army you so badly think we need will be no match for the Sith demons that are the loose," Padme argued.

"But I can try to give the people some sense of security," Mon said, as he handed the proposal to Leia.

"Don't do this Mon. You'll regret it," Padme replied.

"I will do what I must for the sake of the Republic...even if I have to sacrifice a few friendships along the way. You would do well to keep in touch with reality. I sincerely hope you do not spend the remainder of your years at your husband's bedside, pining over a man that is obviously no longer with us. Some may begin to question your sanity if you do," Mon said.

"Deception really is a common trait in the Senate, though you are very good at it, for I never suspected you to be one guilty if it," Padme retorted.

"Make me the villain if you must, Chancellor. Good day," Mon replied coldly, as she saw herself out.

"We'll fight this Leia," Padme told her.

"I know, but it is likely that I will end up having to marry him anyway. I've been told that if I do agree, there is a one month period of preparation that takes place on Hapes. We can refuse this proposal as long as possible and then we still have one month after that to hope that daddy wakes up. If he doesn't...then I will do what must be done," Leia replied sadly. Padme felt tears prick her eyes and she hugged her daughter tightly.

Kira woke up the sounds of a humming light saber coming from the other room. She did not despair, for she knew it was only Luke doing a morning kata. She slipped out of bed and into her robe, before she padded out to the living area. She worried desperately for him. He was not taking his father's incapacitation very well, though he tried to hide it. She knew there was nothing she could really do for him, except give him her love.

"Your love is all I will ever need," he reassured her, as he turned to gaze at her. Even at this early hour, she was still the most beautiful thing he'd ever seen.

"Are you reading my thoughts again?" she asked.

"You think loudly. It's hard not to sometimes, my love," he replied. He was shirtless and sweating profusely. And she was very much enjoying the view. She approached him and he wrapped his arms around her tiny waist, as she kissed him softly.

"If you are reading my thoughts, then you must know that I am worried about you," Kira replied.

"I know, but I'm fine," he assured her.

"I don't believe you, given all the circumstances, but I'll accept your answer for now," Kira replied. Luke smirked.

"Okay, so things have been better. My dad is in a coma. There's a bunch of immortal Sith demons haunting the Republic and a new Sith Lord running amuck. Oh and don't forget that Prince Isore is going to force my twin sister to marry him. Too bad I'm going to kick the Sith out of him next time I see him," Luke replied. Kira wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him tenderly.

"I know things almost seem hopeless right now, but we have to believe that things will be okay," she replied.

"The only thing I believe is okay right now is...us. I have always loved you, but I think in these last few days I've realized just how precious our time is together..." Luke said.

"Oh Luke...I love you," she cried, as their lips met desperately.

"I love you too," he replied, as passion's spell consumed them...

---

"Skywalker's daughter is still refusing to marry Isolder. Eventually, she will have no choice but to accept, but it's not exactly ideal for us to keep waiting on her," Jaren said.

"Yes...I agree. We must do something to speed up the process," Palpatine smiled evilly.

"And I have just the demon for the job," Palpatine said, as they felt a breeze. Jaren looked around strangely, wondering how there could be wind inside a star ship. A figure materialized from the breeze and it bowed to Palpatine.

"Master," it uttered obediently.

"Is that who I think it is?" Jaren asked.

"It is, my son. Rise my friend," Palpatine called. The Sith demon of wind rose slowly, fixating his frightening red eyes on them.

"You know of your mission as I have detailed it to you earlier," Palpatine said.

"Yes my Master," the demon replied. The wind demon fizzled into particles and traveled through the wind.

"Young Leia will soon agree to marry Isolder and when the time is right, we shall hold her life above the dear Chancellor's head. With her husband incapacitated, she will obey me if she wishes for her children to live..." Palpatine sneered evilly.

---

Luke escorted Kira to the Senate building that morning, as he usually did. He would be spending the day at the Senate, as security had been increased greatly. And being that he had three people he loved very much in the building, the Council had agreed to allow him to hold a security post outside his mother's office. Suddenly, he heard a commotion and ran to the balcony railing, peering down into he atrium. However, the moment he reached the balcony, he was knocked on his back by a powerful gust of wind.

"What the..." Luke said, as he pulled himself to his feet. His eyes were wide in astonishment, as a huge twister swirled through the atrium. People screamed and ran for their lives, as the terrible winds destroyed everything in their path.

"Luke...what's going on?!" Leia called, as she and Kira braced themselves against the winds by holding onto the walls.

"Get to mom's office and barricade the door. Then, get under her desk!" Luke called to them, as he pushed them toward his mother's office door.

"I'll be there in a moment!" Luke called to them, as he turned and raised his comlink to his lips.

"Master Secura, we have a serious situation at the Senate building," he called into it, as the heavy winds tossed him about.

*"Luke, what is it and what's that noise?"* Aayla's voice could be heard faintly over the device.

"It's the wind. There's a twister in the Senate building!" Luke called, knowing very well how ludicrous it sounded.

*"I'll get a team and we'll be there soon. Protect the Chancellor..."* she answered. Luke was knocked over by the winds again, as several gusts swirled around him. He watched in horror, as those streams of wind formed into wraiths...

Obi-Wan Kenobi stood at the bedside of his best friend. It saddened Obi-Wan to see Anakin so still and lifeless. Even at Anakin's age of forty, he was still full of energy and even mischief at times.

*"Always on the move,"* as Obi-Wan was fond of saying. But this Anakin was pale and his eyes were closed. He'd seen the healer check his pupils earlier. Even when she'd shined the light in them, the ocean blue irises had been motionless and lifeless. Obi-Wan had seen those eyes filled with many things. Joy and happiness danced in them whenever his children were around. Love sparkled in them, as he looked upon his children and the woman he loved so deeply. Kindness to those around him and the understanding warmth that a friend should have in his eyes. He had even seen those eyes glow with the bright, all encompassing power of the Force and strike fear into the hearts of even the most evil beings. Lifeless was something Anakin's eyes had never been. The light had seemed to have left them and thus had left the galaxy as well. But Obi-Wan refused to believe it was permanent. Anakin would be back, despite the grim outlook most had taken on the situation. He felt a pair of arms wrap around his waist and a pair of soft lips kiss his cheek.

"Credit for your thoughts, my love?" Lea's voice cooed.

"I've never seen him so lifeless, Lea," he told her. Lea rested her head on his shoulder and gave him a reassuring squeeze.

"Nothing keeps Ani down for too long. He'll come back after he's done thinking it's funny making us all pine after him. And when he does return to us, he'll make a grand entrance as always," Lea told him. Obi-Wan smiled at her and they shared a soft kiss. Suddenly, they were interrupted when Jayden burst into the room.

"Mom! Dad! Something's happening at the Senate building!" Jayden cried.

"Slow down, Jay," Lea said in a calm voice.

"Luke called Master Secura and said there's a twister inside the Senate building!" Jayden exclaimed.

"A twister inside the building? Jayden, that's not possible. A twister is a natural disaster and they don't happen with Coruscant's controlled climate," Lea protested.

"The wind demon," Obi-Wan said.

"What?" Lea asked.

"Another demon has appeared it seems. Stay here in the Temple with your mother," he told Jayden.

"But dad, I want to help!" Jayden protested.

"No arguing Jay," Obi-Wan said, as he rushed from the room with his light saber in hand.

"How come he always takes Jeena and leaves me behind? I helped fight the last demon!" Jayden griped.

"And from what your father told me about that, you have no business dealing with anything like that. The other one killed a Master and two senior padawans, as well as dozens of other innocent people. If your father says your place is here, then it is," Lea told him. Jayden nodded in reluctance.

---

Luke slashed his way through the wind wraiths, finding they were harder to destroy than the ground wraiths had been. He could destroy them if his saber slashed directly through them, but due to their abilities with wind, they were extremely fast. Luke successfully destroyed two, but he was vastly outnumbered and the creatures toppled him, growling viciously. Suddenly, as Luke continued to fight them off, he heard a woman's scream coming from his mother's office...

---

Leia and Kira burst into Padme's office.

"Mom, get under your desk. There's danger," Leia said. Three of Padme's handmaidens surrounded their mistress.

"What kind of danger?" Padme asked, as she stepped toward the door.

"No mom, I think it's another one of those demons. Luke said to barricade the door and stay in here until he comes," Leia replied.

"But the people..." Padme protested.

"Luke contacted the Temple. They're on their way," Kira replied, as she and Leia moved a table in front of the door. Padme felt a strong gust of wind blow past her and turned to close her window. But, as she pulled the drapes in her office, she found that there was no window that had been left open.

"Where did that wind come from?" Kira asked nervously. Padme felt cold, like the room had dropped fifty degrees in an instant, as the wind seemed to swirl around her.

"It's after mom...it's the demon," Leia said, as she produced her light saber from a holster on her leg. Leia screamed, as she was blown back hard against the wall.

"Leia!" Padme cried, as she ran to her daughter, despite her handmaiden's protest. Kira drew her blaster and pointed into the empty air. Suddenly, a invisible gust knocked Kira over and she hit her head on the edge of Padme's desk. She fell unconscious to the floor with a large bleeding gash on her forehead.

"Kira!" Padme cried, as she tried to run to her, but was held back by her daughter, who was slowly coming around.

"Mom...no," Leia said. Motee, Elle, and Bene stood in front of the Chancellor and the Senator, blasters drawn and ready to fire. The

wind swirled around Motee and the tendrils swirling around her became visible. Padme cried out in horror, as the dark tendril went down her throat. The handmaiden choked and let out a scream, before she was silenced by the sickening crack of her neck snapping. The wind demon had went down her throat and wrapped itself around her esophagus, before snapping the wind pipe. Motee fell dead to the floor, her eyes stricken with fear.

"Motee!" Padme cried. Elle and Bene trembled in fear, but did not move from their places. The dark tendrils swirled around them and Padme made a desperate plea for their lives.

"Please don't kill them..." Padme cried. Elle and Bene cried out, as the dark tendril flared angrily and shoved them both into the wall. Padme was relieved that it seemed they were still alive, but she grieved for her beloved friend Motee.

"Who are you? What do you want?" Padme cried, as she held Leia close. At last the form materialized and Padme screamed in absolute terror.

"It can't be..." Leia cried, as she held her mother and stared at the man that had haunted her mother's dreams for years.

"Hello my rose..." the ghostly voice said, as his red eyes bored into her.

"No...no, this can't be happening!" Padme screamed. Leia yelped, as his dark tendrils wrenched her mother from her arms and carried her toward him. Padme stared at this man in horror. While he had the visage of Palo, his demon form was so much more frightening to look at. His eyes were blood red and his teeth were sharp, pointed fangs. Padme whimpered, as she felt his icy breath on her neck and his teeth graze her soft, fair skin.

"You're as beautiful as ever, my love. Time has been very kind to you," he hissed.

"Leave her alone!" Leia screamed.

"Silence child," the demon hissed, before turning back to his prize.

"We are finally together again, my sweet. I told you that you'd never really escape me. And this time...he's not here to stop me from taking what I want," Palo hissed. They heard a banging at the door and Leia sensed it was Luke. She rushed to the door and moved the table away.

"Get away from there!" the wind demon snarled. Luke burst into the room and blanched when he saw the identity of the wind demon.

"Get your hands off my mom!" Luke yelled. The light of the Force flashed through Luke's eyes, causing Palo to cower away from his eyes.

"You will be mine Padme..." he hissed, before he released her and dissolved into the wind. Luke caught his mother, before she could collapse and Padme steadied herself. Leia was by her mother's side also and Luke rushed to Kira. He lifted her into his arms, just as she was coming around.

"Luke?" she asked faintly.

"It's okay Kira. I'm going to take you back to the Temple," Luke said, as he tore a piece of cloth off from his tunic and pressed it to the cut on her head.

"I'm fine," she insisted, as he sat her down on the desk. Obi-Wan came into the room, hoping everything was okay.

"The wraiths are dead and the twister disappeared. I assume you scared the demon off again, Luke. Is everyone all right?" he asked.

"I think Bene and Elle are just unconscious...but Motee is dead," Padme choked back a sob.

"Did you see the identity of the wind demon?" Obi-Wan asked.

"It was Palo," Luke answered. Obi-Wan's eyes widened, as he had not be expecting that answer.

"Palo?" he asked. Luke nodded.

"And it seems that he's bent on terrorizing mom again," Leia added.

"His twister also destroyed half the Senate building," Obi-Wan added.

"That's exactly why Leia should accept my proposal so the Hapan military will be at the Republic's disposal," Prince Isolder said, as he entered the room. Luke grit his teeth in anger and before Isolder knew what was happening, he was being slammed against the wall by the young man.

"Stay away from my sister, you piece of Bantha poodoo," Luke spat.

"Take your hands off me!" Isolder protested.

"Not until you stop pressuring my sister into marrying you!" Luke yelled.

"Half the Senate building was just destroyed and people have been killed. How much longer do wish to be selfish?!" Isolder yelled.

"If you really gave a damn about any of us, then you'd provide your military help out of the goodness of your heart, not that they can really do anything against a Sith demon!" Luke screamed at him. Han chose that moment to rush in.

"The building is secure and the wounded have been loaded into transports to be taken to the hospital," Han reported to Obi-Wan.

"Thank you Han," he replied.

"Miss Padme, are you okay?" he asked.

"I...I'm fine Han, just a little shaken," she replied.

"He's back Han," Leia said.

"Who?" he asked.

"Palo...he is the wind demon," Luke replied.

"Stang," Han swore. Leia froze, as Mon Mothma entered the office with a furious look.

"There can be no more delays. We need the Hapan military for increased protection of the people. I ask that you peacefully accept Prince Isolder's proposal. If you do not, then we will be forced to bring this matter to the Senate floor...tonight..." Mon Mothma said.

"You can't do that! You can't control my sister's personal life!" Luke yelled.

"When it concerns matters of Galactic security, we can!" Mon screamed back.

"Stop fighting!" Leia called.

"Do you accept Leia or are you going to force my hand?" Mon asked.

"It looks like I don't have any choice," Leia replied sternly.

"Very good. Prepare to leave with Prince Isolder in the morning for Hapes for the tradition month of preparation," Mon said, as she left briskly, followed by Isolder.

"Leia, you can't go...you can't let them do this!" Luke protested.

"I don't have a choice Luke," Leia replied, dangerously close to breaking down in tears.

"We just have to hope daddy wakes up before the wedding in a month's time," Leia said, as a few tears slipped down her cheeks.

"Well, if you'll have me milady, I'd like to accompany you as your security," Han said, with a soft smile. Leia's eyes shined with gratefulness.

"I would like that very much. Thank you Han," Leia replied.

"We'll figure this out sweetheart," Padme assured her. Leia nodded, as she allowed Han to take her back to her apartment where she would reluctantly begin packing for her trip to Hapes...

# Troubling Events

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars.

AN: Here's chapter 9! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone III

Chapter 9: Troubling Events

Obi-Wan placed his hand on Padme's shoulder.

"Padme, are you sure you're all right?" he asked.

"How is it possible Obi-Wan? How can he really be back? He was never an actual Sith," Padme said.

"This is very true. But he was involved with the Sith and we all know that he was pure evil. He was in Sith hell when the Sith Lord opened the gateway and whatever ritual the Sith performed sought him worthy of its power. In many ways, Palo was just as evil as the Sith, if not more so than some," Obi-Wan answered.

"Don't worry mom. I won't let him hurt you," Luke said.

"I know you won't sweetheart," Padme replied.

"Mom, let me take you back to the Temple...until...until it's time to see Leia off. You should rest," Luke said. Padme nodded sadly and let him lead her out.

---

At dusk, Prince Isolder's ship sat on the landing pad at the Jedi Temple.

"It is time, my dear," Isolder said, taking her hand. Leia glared at him and snatched it away.

"I may have agreed to marry you, but I did not give you permission to touch me. I need to say goodbye to my family and you will not order me around!" Leia spat, as she stalked off. Han met Isolder's eyes and the prince glared at him.

"You are not needed on this voyage, scoundrel," Isolder glared.

"Leia has asked me to accompany her and I will see her security, as her father hired me to do so. When Anakin wakes up, yur gonna have to come up with a really good hiding place," Han warned, as he continued to load the ship. Leia hugged her mother tightly.

"I'll be okay mom. Han will be with me," Leia assured her.

"I know. Everything will be okay. Daddy will wake up soon," Padme tried to assure her. Leia moved on to hug her brother and Kira, while Han approached Padme.

"Take care fo her for me, Han. And take care of yourself too," Padme said.

"Don't worry, Miss Padme. I won't let anything happen to her," Han replied.

"Take care of yur mom, kid," Han told him with a pat on the back.

"I will," Luke replied, as he approached Isolder for a final confrontation.

"I think you manhandled me enough the first time, so please step aside, padawan Skywalker," Isolder said. Two of Isolder's guards stepped in Luke's way. But being his father's son, he wasn't about to back down. An invisible push knocked the two guards away and Luke stepped toward Isore.

"You may be forcing my sister to marry you. But if I find out you've put your hands on her, you'll regret it . And when my father wakes up, which he will, and finds out about all this, you better run, because

he will hunt you down and make you wish you had never been born," Luke threatened, as he lightly shoved the prince with the Force. Isolder stumbled back and ran up the ramp of his ship. Reluctantly, Leia and Han also boarded the ship. A few minutes later, the ship lifted off and soon disappeared from sight.

---

*Padme opened her beautiful brown eyes and discovered with an excited surprise, that once again, her dreams had brought her back to the same beautiful garden. She was barefoot again and wore the flowing white gown like she had before. She ran into the main clearing and spotted her husband sitting on the ground in a meditative trance. He opened his eyes and she gasped, as they glowed brightly with the light of the Force.*

*"Angel..." he stood up and she rushed into his arms with urgency. He swept her into his arms and kissed her passionately.*

*"My love..." she whispered breathlessly.*

*"My angel," he whispered, as he breathed in her scent.*

*"Your eyes were glowing," she said.*

*"I'm training Padme. I'm training so I'm strong enough to take on the Dark Lord this time," Anakin said.*

*"Then you did see him. You know who he is," she stated.*

*"I did, but unfortunately I cannot tell you his identity within this plane. I am very limited as to what I can tell you. Just know that I will get strong enough to release myself from this place," he promised. She hugged him and he felt the wetness from her tears on his neck.*

*"Angel, you're trembling. Something's wrong...tell me," he pleaded.*

*"Oh Ani...so many things are going wrong," she sobbed.*

*"He's back...Palo is one of the Sith demons!" she cried. Anakin's eyes widened. Palo was back and he wasn't there to protect her.*

*"Oh angel..." he whispered.*

*"It gets worse. The Senate is forcing Leia to marry Isolder in exchange for the Hapan military's assistance. The Senate is terrified of the demons and won't listen to me when I tell them that soldiers cannot protect them from this threat.*

*"I will come back to you, Padme and I will set everything right. Until then, I will lend what powers I can to Luke," he said.*

*"I know. I love you so much..." she said, as she crushed her lips against his.*

*"And I love you," he responded, as he captured her lips in his own again.*

---

Leia stared out the window, as the stars streaked by them. She heard the door indicator chime and answered it. She was disgusted to see that it was Isolder.

"Good evening, milady. May I enter?" he asked.

"If you must," Leia replied stiffly. He did so and went to the liquor bar near the kitchen of her quarters and poured himself a glass of Alderaanian brandy.

"May I pour you a drink, my love?" he asked. Leia scowled.

"No. You may state your business and then leave," Leia spat.

"Leia, if we are to be married, then I believe we should get to know each other better. I have arranged for my staff to bring us our evening meal soon. I thought it would be nice to dine together," Isolder replied.

"And if I refuse?" Leia asked.

"Can you not even try to get along with me? Your hostility is growing tiresome. Now, I shall pour you a drink and we will dine together," Isolder insisted.

"Fine," Leia huffed, as she sat down at the dining table.

"If I remember correctly, you love Nabooan red wine," he said, as he sat a glass down for her. Leia sipped at the fragrant wine, everything about it reminding her of her family and home. Tears pricked her eyes and she set the glass down. Their meal was delivered and Leia picked at her food, even though Isolder had all Nabooan dishes prepared. She didn't know if he was trying to impress her or what, but it wasn't working. Isolder reached over and touched her hand and as she tried to pull away, he grasped it tightly.

"My dear, is something wrong with the food?" he asked.

*"No, it's the company," she thought silently.*

"No, I'm just not very hungry. In fact, I'm not feeling very well. I think I'm going to retire," she said, as she rose abruptly and practically sprinted to her bedroom. The door slid closed behind her and she broke down in tears. She fell down on the bed and cried into her pillow. Outside her bedroom, Isolder angrily threw his half full glass of brandy at the wall, causing it to shatter into pieces. He stalked out of her quarters in an angry stomp. Han, who'd been watching the whole scene unknowingly from his security post, slowly approached Leia's door. He could hear her sobbing through the door and knocked softly.

"Leia...it's Han. Do you...I don't know, wanna talk?" he asked. He heard her shuffle around and sniffle, before finally opening the door. Her eyes were red and her face was stained with tears that she was furiously trying to wipe away. Her hair was a mess also, but she still looked incredibly beautiful to Han.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

*"Well, ain't that just the dumbest question I've ever asked! Of course she's not okay, you nerfherder!" he silently scolded himself.*

"Oh Han...I don't think I can do this..." she sobbed. He was surprised when she threw herself into his arms. After his initial shock wore off, he wrapped her in his arms and held her tightly, as he cried against his chest. Han rocked her gently and her breathing slowed. Han realized that's she had cried herself to sleep against him. He cradled her against him, as he swept her off her feet and laid her in her bed, before covering her up. He sat down beside her bed and brushed the disheveled hair out of her face, as he watched her sleep.

"Look, I know this seems kinda silly, cause I don't even know if you, meaning the Force, can actually hear me. Heck, if I hadn't seen it for myself, I wouldn't even believe you existed. But I've seen Anakin use yur power and he does amazing things, so I gotta ask you for help here. You gotta help me protect her somehow...cause," he paused, gulping slightly.

"Cause I love her," Han said, as he continued to watch her sleep. He watched her for several hours, before he finally dozed off in the chair beside her bed...

---

Padme watched out her office window with sadness. Suddenly, it was twenty years ago and she was watching the Clone warships loom over the planet just like they had on that day that the Clones Wars had started. But these warships were not filled with Clone soldiers, but rather the soldiers of the Hapes Consortium. Force All Mighty, how had it come to this again? She wondered this, as she turned back toward her desk. Her hand reached for the family holo she kept on her desk. It had been taken during Anna's run for Queen and they all looks so happy. She set the framed holo down and let her eyes travel over the other holos from over the years. Baby pictures of all three of her beautiful children, pictures of them as children and even one with Han in it as a teenager. Finally, her eyes

came to rest on her wedding holo. She picked it up and tears brimmed her eyes, as she stared at it. It had been one of the happiest days of their lives and she still remembered every detail about that day...and night. A few tears slipped down her cheeks and she quickly wiped them away, as she heard her intercom chime. She cleared her throat.

"Yes?" she answered.

*"Queen Chume is here to see you, majesty,"* Sache informed her. Padme did not have the energy for this woman, but she conceded nonetheless.

"Send her in," Padme replied, as she set the holo down.

"Your majesty," Padme greeted upon the Queen's entrance.

"It is good to see you again, Padme. I find such joy in the fact that we are about to become family," Ta'a said.

"What can I do for you, Ta'a. I am very busy," Padme responded.

"I just wanted to let you know that our children have arrived on Hapes without incident and that the wedding will take place in one month. You will be able to attend, will you not?" Ta'a asked.

"Of course. I will be there to support my daughter," Padme answered.

"It is so tragic that your husband will not be able to attend," the Queen jabbed.

"And we know very well that if my husband does wake up before the wedding, there will be *no* wedding," Padme responded frankly.

"Yes, but no one foresees that happening, do they?" the Queen prodded.

"The Force works in mysterious ways. I warn you not to discount my husband just yet, your highness. You have gotten your way for now, but it shall not last. If we are to be family, then it is time we be honest and dispense with the fake pleasantries," Padme bit back.

"Very well, Padme. I did not wish for it to be this way, but you have left me no choice. You must speak with your daughter. She has locked herself in the lavish quarters we have provided for her and she refuses to dine or even speak to my son," Ta'a said.

"Leia has agreed to marry Isolder, nothing more. I cannot and will not force my daughter to accept your son's supposed affections when she does not want them," Padme argued.

"She must participate in the traditional month of courting!" Ta'a yelled.

"My daughter does not love your son. You are getting your wish by forcing this marriage upon her. Do not expect her to comply with your son's attempts to woo her. He would be wise to keep his hands off my daughter!" Padme retorted.

"I see there will be no reasoning with you, Chancellor. I will see you in a month's time. Do give my regards to your handsome, albeit dead husband. Though it is doubtful that he can hear you," Ta'a jabbed.

"You will kindly see yourself out, your highness or my security will see to it!" Padme screamed. Ta'a smirked and calmly exited the Chancellor's office. Her words affected Padme more than she would ever have liked. Padme collapsed into her chair, sobbing.

*"I'm Never Gone, angel...remember that my love,"*

She gasped, as she heard his voice whispering to her. She shot out of her seat and stared out her window and at the Jedi Temple in the near distance. She placed her hand on the glass, as if reaching out to him.

"I'll never give up on you, my love. You will come back to me," she said, admonishing herself of any doubt Ta'a Chume had managed to wriggle into her subconscious...

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Leia sulked in here quarters by the bay window in her bedroom. She looked out upon the world of Hapes, which was beautiful in its own right, but nothing like her beloved home planet of Naboo.

"Milady, the Prince is requesting your presence at dinner. He is insisting that your attendance is mandatory. Please allow me to help you prepare," the woman said. She was about the same age as Leia and had been assigned to her as her handmaiden.

"I am not hungry. Please tell the prince that I am not feeling well," Leia replied.

"He told me that you would say that and he refuses to accept your decline," the handmaiden replied. Leia sighed and ignored her.

"Very well. I warn you that his majesty will not be pleased with your lack of cooperation," the handmaiden snapped at her, as she left.

"You may tell his majesty that he can rot in Sith hell for all I care," Leia retorted to her, as the woman stormed out. Leia stared out the window for a few more minutes and became agitated when she heard the door indicator chime insistently. She opened her bedroom door, intending to storm out and ran right into Han.

"Hey, hey, where's the fire?" he joked.

"That man is at the door again and I'm going to go give him a piece of my mind!" Leia said.

"Punchin' a Prince? As much as I'd *love* to see that, I ain't gonna want to be coming to visit you in prison," Han said.

"What do you suggest I do?" Leia asked.

"Answer the door and tell prince pretty pants to go away," Han replied.

"Like that will work," Leia said doubtfully. Suddenly, the door opened, thanks to Isolder's staff bypassing the entry code.

"You can't just barge in here!" Leia screamed.

"You have forced me to this, Leia. Your lack of cooperation will not be tolerated any longer. You will have dinner with me and your guard will return to his post," Isolder said.

"I ain't leavin' until Leia tells me to," Han retorted.

"If you do not leave now, Captain Solo, I will make sure you are on the next transport back to Coruscant," Isolder threatened. Han was about to retort, but Leia stopped him.

"No Han, I need you here. Please...I'll be all right," Leia pleaded with him. Han glared at Isolder.

"Fine, but if he tries to touch you..." Han started.

"Then he will feel the wrath of Anakin Skywalker's daughter," Leia finished for him with a smile. Han smirked and she kissed his cheek, a sight that did not go unnoticed by Isolder.

"Please prepare her for evening meal, Lara," Isolder ordered to the handmaiden. Leia shot him an icy glare, before retreating to the bedroom. Isolder did not like her affections for Solo, not one bit. He would have to find a way to get rid of the scoundrel in order to make Leia his...

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The hour in the Senate grew late and many Senators were now leaving. A small group walked together toward the exit. Construction and rebuilding on the atrium had ceased for the day and the building was quiet, except for the discussion the group of six prominent

Senators carried. Suddenly, the lights flickered peculiarly and this stopped their conversation for a moment. They looked around in bewilderment, as the lights flickered on and off.

"Must be a power surge," one man mentioned. As he said that, the sound of electricity could be heard surging through the room. The Senators glanced around and one woman screamed, as a being appeared before her.

"It's one...of those demons!" a man cried. The demonically warped visage of the former Jango Fett stared back at them. He howled a terrible scream at them, as bolts of electricity surged around him. The six Senators screamed in agony, as his powerful lightning ripped them apart...

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Padme sat her vanity, brushing out her long curls. She was dressed in a long periwinkle nightgown and she sighed, looking at the big empty bed behind her. It was a bed she should be sharing with her husband. Suddenly, she heard a knock at her door.

"Come in," Padme called.

"Milady, there is a serious situation at the Senate building," Dorme said.

"What's happening?" Padme asked.

"Another one of those demons has attacked and killed six Senators. Already, several Hapan soldiers have also fallen to this monster. Obi-Wan and a team of Jedi are on their way there now, including your son," Dorme informed her. Padme sighed. It seemed that it was already being proven that the Hapan army was of little help. Padme rushed into her husband's room, where he remained still as he had for the last few weeks. She gazed out the window at the Senate building and silently hoped for Luke and Obi-Wan's safety. Dorme stood in the doorway, watching her mistress. Suddenly, a gust of wind shoved her from the doorway and it closed shut tightly, locking

the handmaiden out. Padme looked around in fright, as the wind gusted around her.

"Your son isn't here to save you this time...and your husband certainly can't do anything," Palo said, as he formed from the wind and gazed at her with his frightening red eyes.

"Stay away from me!" Padme said, as she stood in front of her husband's prone form.

"Nothing will stop me from claiming you this time," Palo hissed, as his arms slithered around her.

"No..." Padme whimpered.

"You know, I could kill him now. It would be fitting since he did the same to me," Palo sneered.

"No...please don't hurt him. I'll...I'll do whatever you want," Padme gave in, hoping to protect her husband like he had her so many times.

"Good...then you will not resist me," the demon hissed in her ear, as his hands grasped the straps of her nightgown. Padme's heart pounded, as she knew she was only moments from being raped.

*"Oh Ani...I'm so sorry,"* she cried to him in her mind. Tears streamed down her cheeks, as the demon shoved her roughly to the floor, before hovering over her.

"Don't cry darling. It won't hurt...much," he hissed evilly, as his eyes glowed red. Padme was frozen in fear, as his evil gaze seared through her.

"Anakin..." she whimpered.

"He can't help you!" Palo snarled, as he reached out, intending to rip her clothes off. Before he could touch her, however, he suddenly shied away from her eyes. Palo roared angrily, as he tried looking at

her again, but the light in her eyes had only grown brighter. Palo glared at the still form of Anakin Skywalker.

"I don't know how you are helping her, but you won't be able to do it once I kill you!" Palo screamed. Suddenly, the door was busted in by Mace Windu, as he rushed in. Following him were Shaak Ti and Master Yoda, all suddenly witnessing the light in Padme's eyes. Yoda ignited his blade and the demon roared in rage.

"This is not the last you've seen of me!" he screamed, as a strong gust of wind swept through the room and he was gone. The light faded from Padme's eyes and Shaak Ti knelt beside her exhausted form.

"Padme...are you all right?" the gentle Master asked.

"I...I think so. What happened?" she asked.

"Somehow, Anakin used his powers through you to protect you from the wind demon," Mace explained. Padme looked at the still form of her husband in surprise.

"Then...this proves it. Ani is still here. He's going to come back to us!" Padme said, with a smile.

"True it would seem. The only question that remains is when," Yoda said. Mace and Shaak Ti helped Padme up and helped her sit down.

"I'm going to inform Bant of what happened here. I think she should take a look at both of you," Mace said. Padme nodded, as he left. Padme took her husband's hand and kissed it softly.

"I don't know how you did it, my love, but you saved me again..." Padme told him.

---

The lightning demon shied away from Luke and disappeared with a roar of anger. The Senate building was littered with the bodies of

Senators, Hapan soldiers, Senate workers and aides, and even a few Jedi.

"If this was the help that the Hapan military was supposed to provide, I'd say it's a grave failure," Obi-Wan mentioned, as death surrounded them. Luke glared over at Mon Mothma, who turned away from his gaze.

"Now is not the time, young one. We need to return to the Temple. I just got a call from Master Yoda. The wind demon attacked your mother," Obi-Wan said. Luke's head snapped up at him.

"Is she all right?" Luke panicked.

"Yes, in fact, it seems that you are not the only one your father is lending his powers to. The Chosen One's light shined from her eyes as well. Master Yoda, Windu and Master Ti all saw it. Your father protected her," Obi-Wan said. Luke smiled.

"Then this has to mean he's coming back!" Luke exclaimed.

"His vitals remain unchanged, but Master Yoda thinks that this means it is only a matter of time before your father awakens from the coma," Obi-Wan said.

"And when he does, all this madness can be put to an end," Luke said, as he spared another glance at Mon Mothma and his thoughts immediately went to his twin sister.

"Come on. Anna will be calling from Naboo, as I'm sure this mess is already all over the Holonet," Obi-Wan said, as he patted Luke's shoulder and they headed back to the Temple. More Hapan soldiers arrived to take care of transporting the dead to the planetary morgue and the fallen Jedi were taken back to the Temple. They had lost too many already and they could only wonder how many more would be lost in this war with the Sith...

# Confessions

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars.

AN: Here's chapter 10! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone III

Chapter 10: Confessions

Luke and his other Jedi comrades painstakingly waded through waist deep water in what was known as the south residential district. It had been almost a month and demon attacks had increased the closer they drew to Leia's wedding. And their attacks grew more personal too, as this morning, the water demon had kidnapped his beloved Kira. And he was frantic to find her before it was too late.

"Kira!" he called, as he looked around. When he heard nothing, he shouted again.

"KIRA!" he screamed.

"Kira...Kira..." a woman's voice cackled in a mocking voice. Luke looked up on top of a building and spotted the water demon, who in life had been known as Sith assassin Aurra Sing.

"Where is she?!" Luke demanded. Aurra Sing rolled her eyes, looking bored.

"You're just as pathetic as your father. Can't live without your precious Senator. Let's just say...I hope she can breathe underwater. Sing cackled evilly, as she watched him wade frantically through the water.

"Kira!" he screamed.

"Luke...help me..." he heard her call faintly and he swam toward the sound of her voice. Luke rounded the corner and found her bound to a light pole and up to her neck in water. Aurra Sing sneered, as she watched Luke.

"Die..." she hissed, as she raised her hand. The water began churning and became infested with her water wraiths. Obi-Wan, Kit Fisto, and the other Jedi began fighting them off in earnest.

"Enjoy your watery graves, Jedi scum," Aurra Sing growled, as she disappeared in a spray of water. The water rushed around Luke and Kira, plunging them underwater. Luke ignited his blade and sliced through the shackles. He wrapped his arms around her and they surfaced together, gasping for air.

"Are you okay?" Luke asked. She nodded and clung tightly to him, as another rush of water plunged them underwater. They surfaced moments later. He scrambled to find his breathing apparatus for Kira. But before he could, she screamed, as she was ripped from his arms and pulled under. Luke put his breathing apparatus in his mouth and dove down. He saw a water wraith carrying her away and knew she would soon run out of air. He swam as fast as he could eventually catching up to the wraith. By that time, Kira had slipped into unconsciousness. Luke ignited his blade and speared the wraith through the chest. It dissolved and Luke scooped Kira into his arms, before swimming to the surface.

"Kira...wake up..." he pleaded, as he caressed her face. He tilted her head back and breathed into her mouth a few times, before she finally began coughing. She opened her light brown eyes and looked up at Luke.

"Put this in your mouth and don't let go," he told her, as he handed the breathing apparatus to her.

"But what about you?" she asked.

"I'll be fine," he said, as he put it in her mouth and took a deep breath, before diving under. Luke used the Force to help him swim faster, while Kira clung to him tightly amidst the raging waters. She put the breathing apparatus in his mouth for a few minutes and then switched. Eventually, they reached the shallower waters and Luke joined the other Jedi in fighting the wraiths. Shaak Ti tossed a blaster to Kira and she began helping as well.

"Blast! This is complete madness!" Obi-Wan griped, as he sliced through two more water wraiths.

"I thought those damn Hapan soldiers were supposed to help us. Where the Sith are they?" Luke asked. Kit Fisto scoffed.

"Their forces have been heavily depleted in the last month. They're all too scared of the demons," Kit Fisto replied.

"They'll be along shortly for the clean up. That's the only useful thing they've been doing," Aayla added. They sliced through the last of the wraiths, just as relief transports arrived. The Jedi would now let the soldiers deal with the relief efforts. But it was really much too late, since hundreds of civilians and several Jedi had already drowned. After helping with what they could, the Jedi that had survived, boarded the transport and it sped off the Temple.

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Padme sat at her husband's bedside, as Dorme packed her things in her travel case.

"I have to go away for a few days," Padme said sadly, as she stroked the hair from his face.

"Leia is being forced to marry Isolder. I'm going to be with her," Padme choked back a sob.

"She's sad Ani. Our baby girl is miserable. We need you," Padme cried. Dorme looked helplessly at her mistress, wishing there was something she could do for her.

"Anna is coming to stay with you while I'm gone. I love you so much," Padme sobbed, as she kissed his still lips. She gasped, as she felt him squeeze her hand.

"Dorme...he's squeezing my hand!" Get Bant!" Padme exclaimed. A few moments later, Dorme returned with Bant.

"Padme, what's going on?" she asked.

"He squeezed my hand...a few moments ago!" Padme said.

"You know that it could have been just a muscle spasm," Bant said.

"Please, just check him," Padme pleaded. Bant began checking his vitals and found that they had remained unchanged.

"I'm sorry Padme, but there is still no brain activity, nor has his heart rate increased. And his pupils are still not responding to light. I'm sorry," Bant said regrettably. A few of Padme's tears fell on his hand, as she kissed it.

"I'm sorry milady, but Leia is on the comm station for you," Dorme said. Padme wiped her tears away and went to the comm station...

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Leia picked at her food, as usual and was completely silent during dinner, hardly responding to Isolder's conversation. It had been like this for the last month and the prince grew increasingly angry with her. He dropped his fork to his plate in irritation.

"You cannot go on like this. You barely eat anything at all," Isolder said, in annoyance.

"I'm just not very hungry these days," Leia said, as she watched a couple of Isolder's people come in. She became alarmed when she saw them begin to remove her personal items.

"Where are you talking my things?" Leia demanded, as she stood. Isolder stood also, blocking her path.

"They are moving your things to my quarters, of course. We will be married in three days and you will begin living with me. You'll also be consummating our marriage with me on our wedding night," Isolder said.

"You can't force me to sleep with you! That's rape!" Leia snapped.

"Not here. Once you are my wife, certain things will be expected of you and you are required to fulfill all your duties as a wife. There will be no more fighting me and just to make sure, I have ordered that Captain Solo leave in the morning. I will not stand for his interference any longer," Isolder stated. Leia felt her heart clench at the thought of Han leaving.

"You can't send Han away. He's my friend," Leia shouted.

"Oh please Leia, I am not an imbecile! I see the way you look at each other. I see how you touch his hand when you think I'm not watching. Force knows what goes on here at night between you two!" Isolder yelled. Leia gasped at his crude insinuation and raised her hand to slap him. He stopped her hand and gripped her arms, pulling her against him. She struggled, but unfortunately, Isolder was much stronger than he looked. Leia whimpered in protest, as he forced his lips onto hers.

"You are mine. Get used to it," Isolder said.

"I am not your wife yet and until I am, you will not put your hands on me!" Leia screamed. He let her go with a light shove.

"Fine. Deny the inevitable if you must. I can wait three more nights if I have to. But there will be no more waiting after that and it will be much more pleasurable for you if you do not fight me any longer," Isolder left her quarters with a smug smirk on his face. At that point, Leia broke down crying. If Han left, she would be at Isolder's mercy.

The thought of losing Han made her heart ache. She needed her mother right now. She would know what to do. Leia turned on the comm and put a call through. A few moments later, her mother appeared on the screen.

"Leia...oh sweetheart, what's wrong?" Padme asked.

"Everything mom. Isolder is ordering Han to leave the planet in the morning," Leia sobbed.

"Oh Leia," Padme said.

"It gets worse. Isolder told me that he is going to force me to...consummate our marriage with him," Leia sobbed. Padme's eyes widened. She knew then that she had to do something to get her daughter out of this horrible situation. Padme's thoughts were interrupted by Leia's question.

"Mom...um..." Leia began uncertainly.

"What is it sweetie? You know you can talk to me about anything," she said.

"How did you know...daddy was the one? How did you know if it was really true love?" Leia asked timidly. Padme smiled gently at her.

"Well...your father was always very romantic. He always has been. But it was never so much what he said, though his words were always loving and beautiful. But I knew because of the way he made me feel, just by the way he looked at me, his touch, his kiss. He didn't need words to tell me how much he loved me. The first time he kissed me...I just knew. I felt like I was..." Padme trailed off, as Leia finished her sentence.

"You felt like you were walking on air. You felt happier than you ever thought possible," Leia paused, as her eyes brimmed with tears.

"Mom...I think I'm in love with Han. What am I going to do?" Leia sobbed.

"You're going to do whatever you have to in order to be happy," Padme replied.

"But if I leave with Han, it will cause an uproar in the Senate," Leia said.

"You let me handle the Senate. Tell Han how you feel, sweetheart, and then you both need to leave Hapes and hideout somewhere for as long as you can," Padme said.

"Mom..." Leia began, but Padme cut her off, knowing her daughter was trying to apologize in advance for all the trouble this would cause.

"Follow your heart, Leia. It won't lead you wrong," Padme said.

"I love you mom," Leia replied.

"I know you too sweetheart," Padme said, as the transmission blinked out. Han came into the room a few moments later.

"I heard yelling earlier. Are you all right?" he asked.

"Yes," she nodded.

"Good, cause there's kind of something I gotta tell you," Han said.

"There's something I have to tell you too," she replied.

"Well, I gotta tell you before I lose the nerve," Han said, as he began pacing.

"All right," she relented, as she watched him pace nervously.

"Look, I know I ain't exactly the guy most Senators would go for, but I can't help the way I feel about you. I understand if you don't feel the

same...but I'm in love with you and I can't stand the way that prince treats you," Han confessed. Leia felt happy tears prick her eyes.

"I love you too, Han," she replied. Han didn't seem to hear her, as he was too busy pacing.

"Look, I know I ain't the kinda guy you see yourself with, but your dad will kill me if I let you marry Isore. Get your stuff, because I'm about to commit a crime by kidnaping a Senator," he ranted. Leia smirked.

"Okay," she replied, as she casually walked to her bedroom to pack her things. She wondered how long it would take the Nerf to figure it out. A few moments later, Han stalked into her room and looked at her.

"What did you say?" he asked.

"I said I love you too nerfherder. And instead of having my declaration rewarded with a kiss, I was ignored," Leia replied. Han's eyes widened.

"You...you love me?" he asked.

"Yes Han, I love you and I was hoping you'd rescue me by kidnaping me," she replied. He smiled.

"And I was hoping you'd kiss me too, but oh well," Leia teased, as she causally walked by him. He pulled her back and pressed his lips to hers in a deep, passionate kiss.

"Was that good enough for you?" he asked.

"Um...that will be fine," she replied breathlessly.

"But I do not take kindly to being ignored. You'd do well to remember that in the future," Leia said.

"You're gonna be a pistol, aren't you?" he asked.

"Think you can handle me?" she replied playfully.

"I think I'm up to the challenge," he replied, as their lips met again. Later that night, as everyone in the palace slept, the Millennium Falcon left Hapes behind carrying two passengers...

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As soon as Han raised the cabin lights. Leia unfastened her belt and went to the cockpit. Han turned and looked at her, as she entered. He remembered seeing her for the first time when he returned to Naboo a few months ago. When he had left years ago, she was just a little girl. And when he returned, she had blossomed into this beautiful, remarkable young woman that now stood before him. He could scarcely believe it at times. Han had been a bit of a scoundrel in his smuggling escapades, occasionally indulging in a few one night stands. But no woman had ever affected him the way Leia Skywalker did. For one thing, he hated seeing her cry. Unfortunately, Isolder had made her do a lot of crying lately, but he had been there to hold her. And it had taken every ounce of self control he had not to put his blaster between Isolder's eyes and fire. Her smile, however, made his heart soar like nothing ever had before. He couldn't help but be captivated by her angelic beauty and elegance. He took her hand and she made herself comfortable across his lap, much to his surprise. Though, she was a Skywalker and her boldness should not have surprised him.

"So...captain," she purred.

"Where are you taking us?" she asked.

"Remember Lando?" he asked. She nodded.

"He's got quite a bit of clout on Bespin. Runs a compound now in Cloud City. We should be safe there for a while," Han replied. Leia seemed satisfied with that answer and kissed him passionately. She stood up and pulled him toward the cabin, but he stopped her before they reached the bed chambers.

"Leia...are you sure?" he asked.

"I love you...and I want to be with you. You...you want that too, right?" she asked timidly.

"Of course I do," he replied quickly to ease her fears.

"I just don't want you to feel pressured into anything you're not ready for," he said.

"I am ready. I've never...been with anyone before, but you're the right man...and I want this," she assured him. Han lifted her chin and slanted his lips over hers in a deep, loving kiss. Leia's arms encircled his neck, as he lifted her into his arms and carried her to the bed chambers...

---

The next morning, Padme was fully prepared to deal with an angry Prince Isolder. As his angry visage appeared on the screen, she was not intimidated in the least.

"Where is she?!" he yelled.

"Prince Isolder, you will lower your tone," Padme answered sternly.

"She is gone and so is that scoundrel! Where are they?!" he demanded.

"I assure you that I do not know," Padme replied.

"I have checked her call records and the last one she placed was to you last night!" Isolder screamed.

"My daughter needed her mother. She called me in tears and she told me about your threats. No one threatens my children, Isolder," Padme replied angrily.

"If Leia is not returned to Hapes in forty-eight hours, I am withdrawing my troops!" he threatened.

"Your soldiers have been ineffective. Leia will not be returning. Our deal is terminated," Padme stated. Behind Isolder, unseen to Padme, was Jaren.

"You will regret this," Jaren whispered, controlling his brother's mind.

"You will regret this!" Isolder yelled. Padme did not respond to him and ended the transmission.

"Shall I track them down?" Jaren asked.

"The deal has been terminated," Isolder replied.

"But you still want Leia. You want to make her pay for humiliating you...and you want him to pay for taking her away," Jaren said. Isolder blinked and parroted his words back to him. Ta'a smirked, as she walked in.

"Yes Jaren, find them. We shall make them pay for their treachery," Ta'a said.

"Yes my Queen," Jaren smiled evilly, as he left.

"Don't worry my son, everything will work out as it should. Perhaps, you should lie down and rest," Ta'a suggested. Isolder nodded and left to do so.

"Everything is going as planned. Soon, the galaxy's true ruler shall reign once again...forever," Ta'a said.

# Awakening

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars.

AN: Here's chapter 10! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone III

Chapter 11: Awakening

*Padme was dreaming again. She was in her husband's arms in the same garden, lying atop his bare chest. Everything would have been perfect...if only this was not happening in her dreams.*

*"I can't believe it. You've really been training with Qui-Gon this whole time?" she asked. He nodded and kissed her forehead.*

*"Yes, he's been training me to hone my powers even more. Every ounce of power I have will be needed to defeat the Sith this time," he replied.*

*"I just want you back. I want you back and I want everyone else to just leave us alone. It is selfish, I know, but I don't care," she pouted. He smirked.*

*"Yes you do. You care way too much and I promise that when I come back to you, this time will be forever," he responded. She lazily traced her finger along the defined lines of his chest and cuddled closer to him.*

*"Things are getting very bad, Ani. Leia's career is in tatters, because she ran off with Han. They're dragging her name...our name through the mud. She doesn't deserve it and I wish there was more I could do," Padme said.*

*"Unfortunately, you can't control the press, angel. But I promise that when I get out of this predicament, I'll set things right and make sure*

*Leia's name and our name is cleared. So, Han and Leia, huh?" he asked, with a half smile. Padme smiled back.*

*"Yes...it looks like Han will officially be our son someday," Padme replied.*

*"Well, if Leia has to marry someone, then I can't think of anyone I trust more than Han," Anakin replied.*

*"Me either," Padme smiled.*

*"Has he bothered you again since that day I lent you my powers?" Anakin asked, referring to Palo.*

*"Not directly...but I often feel a breeze brush past me throughout the day. I know it's him...watching me. I'm afraid to even undress, because I know he's watching my every move every chance he has. He frightens me..." Padme replied. Anakin clenched his fist, as he felt a tear fall on his chest.*

*"He won't harm you, Padme. I'll make sure of it," Anakin said.*

*"I need you Ani...we all need you..." she sobbed. He held her crying form and kissed her tears away. Soon, they noticed it was becoming hazy around them.*

*"I don't...want to leave," Padme cried.*

*"It won't be much longer now, my love, I promise," he assured her. Padme crushed her lips against his for a final kiss, before she faded away. Anakin sighed sadly and dressed. He walked deeper into the garden and stopped in a clearing.*

*"Master?" he called. The shimmering, ghostly blue form of Qui-Gon Jinn appeared.*

*"I'm here Ani," Qui-Gon replied.*

*"Master, I'm ready...I have to be. My family needs me. I fear that something terrible will happen to them all if I'm not there to protect them," Anakin pleaded.*

*"You think you're ready? You think you're ready to take on this new version of Palpatine?" Qui-Gon questioned.*

*"Yes Master. He caught me by surprise last time...but he won't this time. My family is in peril," Anakin answered. Qui-Gon nodded.*

*"Much you still have to learn, young one," Qui-Gon said.*

*"I know Master, but I have to take my chances. If something happened to the people I love because I wasn't there, I'd never forgive myself. Padme and my children need me," Anakin pleaded.*

*"Yes, well, before you interrupted me, I was going to add that I think you're ready too," Qui-Gon replied. Anakin's eyes widened.*

*"You do?" he asked.*

*"I have taught you all I know. Any more training you do now will have to be with Master Yoda, for he is the oldest and wisest Jedi," Qui-Gon said, before pointing to the path ahead of him.*

*"Take that path and as you near the end of this garden, you will see a bright light. Keep running toward it and you'll be back where you belong...with your family," Qui-Gon told him. Anakin smiled in excitement.*

*"Thank you Master...for everything," Anakin said.*

*"No need to thank me Ani. It's not your time yet, so go along now," Qui-Gon ushered him. Anakin gave him one last smile, before he began running down the path, which became lighter the farther he went...*

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Han landed the Millennium Falcon on the designated landing pad. He dropped the ramp and led Leia down.

"Han, you old scoundrel, how are ya?" Lando asked, as they shook hands.

"Never better," Han replied, as Lando caught sight of Leia.

"I'll say. And who might you be?" Lando asked smoothly, as he kissed her hand.

"Leia Skywalker. It's nice to see you again, Lando," she replied.

"Leia? Little Leia?" he asked in surprise.

"The same," she replied.

"Wow. You know how lucky you are I hope," Lando told Han. Han put his arm around her waist and they exchanged a loving glance.

"Yeah...I know," he replied.

"Well, come on. I'll show you both to a room and then you can join me for evening meal. You must be starving," Lando said. They nodded and followed him into the compound.

---

Anna arrived at the Temple two days later for a visit. By now, the Holonet was running with the story of Leia's desertion and sudden disappearance. Padme refused to comment, despite being hounded by the press. She had experienced a very heated exchange with Mon Mothma, causing her to be very curious as to why her former friend had turned on her so suddenly. She had done some digging the last couple days and found some very interesting things. She planned to confront Mon with what she had found later that day. But at the moment, she was content on greeting her youngest daughter and spending time with her.

"Hi mom," Anna said, as she greeted Padme with a hug.

"Hi sweetheart," Padme replied, as they both walked to Anakin's bedside. Anna was dressed in a simple dress and was not donning her elaborate make-up and costume she usually did as Queen of Naboo.

"Oh daddy," Anna said sadly.

"He can hear you, baby, I'm sure of it. Talk to him," Padme said.

"Hi daddy, it's me Anna. We really miss you and we really need you. I hope you come back to us soon," Anna said, as she held his hand. She gasped, as she felt him squeeze her hand.

"Mom..." she said, as she tried to pull her hand from his grip, but couldn't, for he was holding too tightly. Padme gasped and turned to Dorme.

"Get Bant quickly!" she called. Dorme hurried out of the room and to the Healer's ward, returning a few minutes later with Bant.

"Bant, I think he's waking up!" Padme called, as the Jedi healer arrived. Bant began checking him.

"His heart rate is increasing and I am getting brain activity! Keep talking to him!" Bant exclaimed.

"Daddy, it's Anna. Please wake up," Anna pleaded.

"Ani...it's me. Follow my voice, love. Come back to me," Padme urged. Padme saw his eyes flutter.

"That's right Ani...open your eyes. Let me see those beautiful blue eyes," Padme urged. Anakin's eyes fluttered again and slowly opened. Anakin looked around groggily and smiled at the sight of his beloved angel's face. Happy tears streamed down Padme and Anna's cheeks.

"Oh Anakin!" Padme cried, as she threw her arms around him. He smiled and kissed her hair. He offered his arm to his youngest daughter and pulled her into his arms as well, as she too cried happy tears.

"I need to go find Luke! And uncle Ben!" Anna exclaimed. Anakin nodded to her and she kissed his cheek, before running out of the room. Padme continued to cling to him and Bant tapped her on the shoulder.

"Sorry Padme, but I need to run a few quick tests," Bant said. Padme nodded and stood up, but did not let go of his hand.

"Nice of you to join us in the land of the living again," Bant teased him. Anakin tried to retort, but found he had no voice.

"Bant, how come he can't speak?" Padme asked.

"His voice will return soon. Since he's been in a coma for almost two months, it will take a few days before he's walking and talking. Through, knowing this one, I'll be telling him to shut up in just a few hours," Bant said wryly. Anakin smirked at her.

"Until then, he can use this to communicate," Bant said. Anakin smiled and picked up the electronic pen.

*Thanks.* He wrote.

"You're welcome, but I still expect you to get plenty of rest until I release you," Bant pointed her finger at him. Anakin rolled his eyes and scribbled something else on the pad.

*Yes mommy.* He wrote.

"Always a smart ass. Goodbye brat," Bant said, as she left. Padme smiled at him and brushed the hair from his forehead. Anakin touched his lips.

"Oh, are you thirsty sweetheart? I can get you some water," she said. Anakin shook his head no and scribbled something on the pad. Padme looked down and saw that he had wrote the word "kiss". She smiled and leaned in.

"Oh, you want this," she replied softly, as their lips met in a deep, passionate kiss.

---

Leia stood out on the balcony that overlooked Cloud City and breathed in the fresh air.

"You truly belong among the clouds," Lando said, Leia jumped, as his voice startled her.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to alarm you. I just came to tell you evening meal is in two hours. I hope you and Han will be joining me. It will be nice to catch up," Lando replied. Leia nodded.

"We'll be there," Leia answered, as Han walked in. He'd been tinkering with the Falcon for the last few hours.

"I'll see you both at dinner then," Lando said, as he left them to be alone. Leia wrapped her arms around his neck and pressed her lips to his in a sweet, passionate kiss.

"Hello to you too," he replied, with a smirk, as their lips met again.

"So, we have a couple hours before dinner," she mentioned casually. He smirked.

"Whatcha want to do?" he asked playfully. She smiled, as their lips met in a passionate kiss. Han whisked her into his arms and carried her off to the bedroom...

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"Well, it looks like everything in here is quite normal," Obi-Wan said, as he and Luke entered the room. Anakin and Padme broke the very

passionate kiss they were readily engaged in and flushed slightly.

"Dad?" Luke asked. Anakin smiled at his son and Luke threw his arms around his father. Luke pulled back from the hug and wiped his tears away.

"I...'m o...kay," Anakin said. His voice was very hoarse and barely a whisper. Obi-Wan hugged him next.

"Force you had us scared for a while," Obi-Wan whispered. Anakin smiled at him, as he pulled back.

"Hmmm...well, nice of you to return to us, Master Skywalker,"

Anakin smiled at the small Jedi Master, as he hobbled into the room. The little green Master carried a vile of some sort of strange liquid. He handed it to Anakin.

"Drink this you will. Heal your vocal cords, it will. Brewed it myself, I did, from Carniferous plants. Many healing properties, the plant's leaves have. Drink, drink," Yoda insisted. Anakin tipped the vile back and began drinking . The look on Anakin's face as he drank the rancid tasting liquid was one of pure agony. Once he finished, he sputtered and coughed.

"Mmm...tastes good I think," Yoda said.

"Master...that was the most horrible tasting stuff I've ever had," Anakin said in a voice that was clear and strong.

Hey...my voice!" Anakin exclaimed.

"Mmmhmm...told you I did that it would heal your voice. Make fun of my cooking again, you should not," Yoda said, tapping his walking stick purposefully on the ground.

"Thank you Master," Anakin replied graciously.

"Been speaking to Qui-Gon in my meditations, I have. Been training you to face the Sith again, he has. Time for you to tell us what you remember about the night you fought this new Sith Lord, it is," Yoda said.

"You were communicating with Qui-Gon while you were in a coma?" Obi-Wan asked. Anakin nodded.

"While I was in the coma, I was in some sort of plane of existence between life and death. I was training with Master Qui-Gon. In her dreams, Padme would come to me too," Anakin said. Obi-Wan looked to her.

"You were seeing him in your dreams?" Obi-Wan asked. She nodded.

"Yes, but I knew no one would really believe me and Anakin told me it would be best to stay quiet about it," she told him and their two children.

"Know the identity of the Sith Lord, do you?" Yoda questioned.

"One of them. I could not get a look at the other...but I do know that the Sith Lord's apprentice is his son. He said so himself," Anakin said.

"Anakin...who is the Sith Lord" Obi-Wan asked. All present looked at him with rapt attention.

"Darth Sidious...or better known to us as Palpatine," Anakin stated. His answer stunned them all and flooded their minds with questions.

"But Palpatine...is dead!" Padme exclaimed.

"I know. I couldn't believe my eyes either. But the Sith I fought was Palpatine. He was younger though from the way it looked. Middle aged rather than elderly and the Force lightning he hit me with was red. I don't remember much, but he's obviously more powerful than

before. His red Force lightning busted right through my shield. His son has to be the one responsible for bringing him back. I don't know who he is, but he's been out there for the last twenty years plotting his revenge," Anakin said.

"Many dark magics the Sith holocrons contain. Many dark powers can be learned by studying them. Safe to say this offspring of Palpatine's has studied in the Sith Temples on Korriban, it is," Yoda said.

"But even if this son of Palpatine's was able to release him from Sith hell, where did he get this younger copy of his father's body?" Luke wondered. Anakin, Padme, and Obi-Wan all looked at each other.

"Kamino," they replied simultaneously.

"He cloned his father. We need to investigate," Obi-Wan said.

"Agree I do. Go to Korriban, you and your son will, Obi-Wan. Send Luke and Jeena to Kamino, we will," Yoda said.

"But what about me?" Anna asked.

"You have to return to Naboo, honey," Padme answered.

"I just don't feel right about gong back home with everything that's going on here," Anna replied.

"I know princess, but your mother is right. Everything will be fine. I'm sure I'll be walking by the end of the day once Barriss puts me in one of her healing trances," Anakin said.

"Yes...no time for slow recovery there is, unfortunately. Tell Master Offee we need her assistance, I will," Yoda said, as he hobbled out. As his family gathered around him, he missed the presence of his little Leia.

"Padme, do you know where Leia and Han are?" he asked.

"I'm sorry Ani, but she hasn't contacted me yet. I'm really worried," Padme replied.

"I'm sure she and Han are just laying low," Luke tried to assure his parents.

"Yeah, she'll probably contact us when she thinks it's safe," Anna added. At that moment, Barriss arrived.

"I hate to interrupt, but I'd like to get you walking again," Barriss said. Reluctantly, his wife and kids left so he could begin his intense therapy session with Barriss. For the time being, Anakin's awakening was being kept a closely guarded secret. Only when he was completely well would the galaxy know that their chosen hero had returned...

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*Three days later...*

The last three days had been blissful for Han and Leia, as they spent their time secluded in Lando's Cloud City compound. Leia knew she needed to contact her mother, but she didn't trust that the communication channels were completely secure. She had a feeling Isolder had his soldiers combing the galaxy for her. She put that thought out of her mind and enjoyed the feeling of being in her lover's arms, as they watched Bespin's sunset from their balcony window. Leia smiled, as Han trailed kisses along her neck.

"I love you..." Leia whispered.

"I love you too. I've never been this happy," he mentioned.

"Me either. Though I hope mom isn't worrying herself to death over us," Leia replied.

"Me too. Unfortunately, I don't think it's quite safe to call yet. Maybe in a few days when the search calms down a bit," he replied.

"I agree. I'm sure we're all over the Holonet and Isolder probably has half the Hapan army looking for us," Leia said.

"Yeah and they're not the only ones looking for me," Han muttered.

"What?" Leia questioned.

"Nothing," Han said, as he turned away.

"Han, I can tell when you're hiding something. I think we should agree that there will be no secrets between us," Leia said.

"Boy, can't keep anything from you, can I? You really are Anakin Skywalker's daughter," Han smirked.

"What's bothering you, Han?" she asked.

"I haven't been completely honest with everyone. There's a reason I came back to Naboo. I was in trouble Leia and I couldn't get up the courage to be honest with your father. I...I was afraid he'd be disappointed in me," Han said.

"Han, daddy loves you like a son. He'll still love you like his own no matter what you've done," Leia assured him.

"That's just the thing though. He and your mom were the only people who ever gave a damn about me! They believed in me and loved me, unlike my own father and the truth is...I screwed it up. I got kicked out cause I couldn't take orders. Your dad is the only guy I've ever been able to take orders from. Instead of swallowing my pride, I royally fucked up the opportunity your dad gave me by being a know-it-all jerk. I'm a screw up just like my old man always said. I sure as hell don't deserve you," he said, as he turned away. Leia walked around him, so he would look at her.

"Han, just because you lost a job and made a mistake isn't going to stop me from loving you. And mom and daddy wouldn't love you any less either," Leia said.

"Yeah, well, the story ain't over. It gets worse...much worse," Han replied. She took his hands in her own.

"Nothing you can say will make me stop loving you. Tell me...tell me everything," she pleaded. He sighed.

"After I got kicked out of the military, I crashed here with Lando for a while. I started playing a lot of Sabaac and eventually won the Falcon from Lando. I met a prominent smuggler who frequented Cloud City and he told me I could make a good living by smuggling for him. So, I started smuggling his stolen goods for him. I knew it was wrong and I was so ashamed, because I knew your dad arrested guys everyday for doing what I was doing. For a while, the money was really good and the lifestyle grew on me. It also aged me beyond my years. I drank...I did spices...and most regrettably...I slept around. Then, my employer was dragged off to Tatooine for refusing to pay a debt to Jabba the Hutt. The slemo got thrown to the Rancor and Jabba inherited all his business and employees. I worked for Jabba, cause I really didn't have a choice. I got deep in debt with him...and he gave me thirty days to pay in full. So, I came to your dad. I was so ashamed that I couldn't tell him the truth. That's why I asked him for a job. I knew I could make enough, pay Jabba, and then cut my ties. But then this whole mess started and I lost track of time. Jabba surely has a bounty on my head now...and we're both all over the Holonet. So it's a good bet we'll be discovered soon. You're in danger by being with me," Han said.

"I don't care. I won't let you leave me," she replied.

"I ain't letting Jabba get his hands on you too," Han said.

"We'll leave tonight. We'll go wherever we have to. We'll move as much as possible," she replied.

"You deserve better than that," Han replied.

"But I want you. Besides, once daddy wake up, he'll set this right. He was planning on dealing with Jabba anyway. It's one of his life's

goals to free the slaves on Tatooine," Leia replied.

"You'd really just take off with me at a moment's notice?" he asked.

"In a heartbeat. I'll pack our things and you go tell Lando we have to leave," Leia replied.

"I really don't deserve you," he said.

"Yes you do and you have me...all of me," Leia replied. Their lips met in a searing kiss for a tender moment, before they separated in order to take care of their tasks...

# Torn Apart by Evil

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars

AN: Here's chapter 12! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone III

Chapter 12: Torn Apart by Evil

Leia sat her travel case down on the landing bay, as Han did the checks on the ship to make sure they were okay for take off.

"Is everything okay?" she asked.

"Yeah, Lando's coming to see us off and then we're good to go," he replied.

"I think you might want to put a hold on your little journey...permanently, Solo," a raspy voice chuckled. Han whipped around and drew his blaster. Leia turned also and pointed her own blaster at the man as well. He was human, but a frightening looking person. He was very tall and large, armed with various weapons. He was bald and wore an eye patch. He had horrible battle scars on his face, chest, and arms. His teeth were disgusting and crooked.

"Well, well, if it isn't Filth Armen himself, Jabba's favorite errand boy," Han goaded.

"It's Filtch, you disgusting slug," he spat.

"You ain't got room to call anyone else disgusting, Filtch. Now beat it...or do I need to remind you who took your eye?" Han warmed. Filtch laughed evilly.

"Jabba will pay me good for bringing you in. I ain't stupid enough to try and take you alone, Solo. I brought help," Filtch snarled. Han

frowned, as several Hapan soldiers surrounded them. Two of the soldiers pulled Lando along, whom was their prisoner.

"Drop your weapons...or I'll order my men to execute your friend," Jaren stated, as he appeared from the shadows. Reluctantly, Leia and Han dropped their blasters, as Jaren approached Leia.

"Prince Isolder does not take kindly to being made a fool of...and neither do I," Jaren said, as he stood face to face with her...

"He doesn't need my help to do that...and neither do you," Leia retorted. She swore she saw a flash of yellow in his eyes for a split second, just before he backhanded her across the face. Leia swore she felt electricity behind the blow, as she was thrown to the ground.

"Bastard! How dare you hit her?!" Han roared, as he fought against the three soldiers that were holding him back. Filtch embedded his large fist in Han's abdomen, punching him twice there and then once in the face. Leia whimpered, as Jaren hauled her to her feet.

"You'll be returning with me to Hapes for your wedding," Jaren said.

"My mother terminated the agreement. You cannot force me into this marriage anymore!" Leia protested.

"Watch me," Jaren growled, as he shackled her wrists.

"As for lover boy, he'll be taken back to Jabba where he'll rot for the rest of his days. Tell me, Mr. Calrissian, your facility is equipped with a carbonite freezing chamber, is it not?" Jaren asked.

"Yes," Lando replied wearily.

"Good. You will lead us there. We must have a means of transporting Captain Solo safely back to Tatooine. We can't have him escaping," Jaren said.

"But...we've never used carbon freezing on a person! It could kill him!" Lando exclaimed.

"Oh well, if that's the case, I'll just pay this bounty hunter his fee for his trouble. If you refuse to lead us to the carbon chamber, then an unfortunate tragedy might befall some of your people," Jaren threatened. Having no choice, Lando led them into the compound.

---

Padme sat at her desk, looking at the files she would present to Mon Mothma in their meeting in just a couple hours. She did not see Mon's career being able to survive what she had discovered. She only had the power to suspend Mon from her post, but once word reached her people, it was unlikely she would be allowed to run for office again. Her people wouldn't vote for her after they learned of her dealings. There was a chime at her door.

"Come in," she called. She expected that Mon Mothma might be early, but was surprised to see her husband walking in. Her mouth dropped open and she rushed into his embrace.

"Ani...you're walking already!" she exclaimed.

"There's nothing a few hours in Barriss' healing trance can't do," he replied. Padme threw her arms around him tightly.

"Oh my love..." she sobbed and he felt a wetness on his neck.

"It's okay angel...I'm here," he told her.

"Did anyone see you? We don't want everyone, particularly, the Sith to know yet," Padme said. He smirked.

"No one remembers seeing me," he replied. She smacked his chest playfully.

"You are so bad," she pretended to scold.

"And you love it," he replied, as he pressed against her.

"I do," she agreed, as their lips met passionately. Padme ran her fingers through his hair, as he plundered her mouth lustfully. Padme's work was forgotten, as she began unbuttoning her husband's tunic. Anakin used the Force and shut all the curtains, darkening her office considerably.

"Sofa," she said breathlessly. He picked her up and she wrapped her legs around his waist, as he carried her to the sofa...

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An hour later, Padme lay spooned against her husband on the sofa with his cloak covering their exposed bodies. Anakin nuzzled her neck and shoulders while placing soft kisses on her skin. Padme giggled, as he blew softly in her ear.

"As much as I would love to stay here all day, Mon Mothma will be here anytime," Padme said. He nodded and reluctantly, they went into the fresher at the back of her office to dress and clean up. Thirty minutes later, Padme sat at her desk when her office door chimed.

"Come in," she called. Senator Mon Mothma entered with a stoic, unreadable expression plastered on her face.

"Thank you for coming, Senator Mothma, please sit," Padme said. She did so reluctantly.

"I do hope this doesn't take too long, Chancellor. I have a very busy schedule today," Mon said.

"Oh, I assure you, this won't take long at all," Padme replied.

"For twenty some years before this, you were always a friend and trusted colleague. So it's only natural that your sudden turn on me made me very curious," Padme began.

"I hope you did not call me here to discuss our political friendship, for that's all it ever was. We shared the same interests for most of our careers and now we do not. That has always been your problem,

Padme. You become far too attached to those around you. One cannot let their personal lives interfere with their career in the political arena," Mon lectured.

"And yet, they keep electing me. The public is well aware of my staunch devotion to my husband and our children. I've found it to be a great strength of mine and perhaps a weakness at times. A weakness that you exposed ruthlessly in a time of peril for me," Padme said.

"If you are referring to Leia, I was only doing what needed to be done for the Republic. You were too busy sobbing over your husband to do what needed to be done," Mon retorted.

"Anakin and I do not take kindly to those who try and harm one of our children; physically or emotionally. And if you were doing what was best for the Republic as you say, then why do your account records show three very large deposits made into your account by the Hapan treasury!" Padme yelled, as she slammed the datapad down in front of her.

"How...how did you get into my personal records?" Mon stammered.

"As you know, as Chancellor, should I suspect misdealing among my constituents, I only must be in agreement with two Council members to have the financial records of the person in question seized. Master Kenobi and Master Yoda both agreed with me when I told them I believed you were involved in said misdealing. I want to know why your involved with the Hapan government and what Leia has to do with it!" Padme demanded. Mon rose quickly.

"I need my attorney present if we are to continue this line of questioning," she said, as she turned and ran right into Anakin. She jumped in surprise, as she had been positive that the man before her would never regain consciousness.

"Ma...Master Skywalker?" she said nervously

"An attorney won't be necessary. Your going to tell us why your in league with Queen Chume and exactly what our daughter has to do with it...now," Anakin demanded.

---

Steam billowed around the freezing chamber, as they entered the frigid control room.

"Put him in," Jaren ordered, as they shoved Han onto the platform.

"I'm telling you, this could kill him!" Lando yelled. Jaren smirked, as Leia watched him wrap a leather strip around his hand. Lando yelped painfully, as Jaren hit Lando's face with the leather strip covered hand. A bruising welt appeared on his cheek and blood trickled down his chin from his busted lip.

"Shut up...or I might try testing it on you first," Jaren threatened, as he approached Han.

"Prince Isolder asked that I make sure I let you know how much he despises you, scoundrel," Jaren said, as he hit Han across the temple. Han grunted in pain and blinked his eyes.

"He doesn't like it when people steal his belongings," Jaren growled.

"She ain't his," Han rasped, which earned him another belt across the mouth and a knee to the gut.

"She is now. Enjoy Jabba's scum infested palace, for I doubt you'll ever leave there," Jaren said, as he hit him a few more times, ignoring Leia's sobs and pleas for him to stop. Blood leaked from a gash on Han's forehead, from one on his cheek, his nose, and his mouth. Jaren stepped back.

"Put him in," he ordered to the technician.

"I love you!" Leia cried. Han looked up at her.

"I know beautiful, I love you too," he replied, as he was lowered into the machine. Han clenched his eyes shut, as cold steam shot up. A few minutes later, a robotic arm lifted the carbonite slab from the pit and dropped it to the floor. Leia cried out in horror, as the pain etched on Han's frozen face was evident.

"He's alive," the technician reported.

"Good. Then you'll kindly load him into Mister Armen's ship, so he may be on his way to collect his bounty," Jaren said, as he grabbed Leia's arm.

"Let's go!" he ordered to his men, as he dragged Leia along to his shuttle. Lando watched helplessly, as she was shoved onto Jaren's ship, which took off moments later. Lando motioned to his aide, who was ready for orders.

"I need to contact the Chancellor of the Republic immediately," Lando said.

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Mon Mothma returned to her seat nervously, as Anakin walked around and stood beside her chair.

"Master Skywalker, you were incapacitated and we needed help once these demons began attacking. Queen Chume was willing to offer the assistance of the Hapan army if Leia married Isolder. Do you realize that Leia would have one day been Queen of Hapes? Think of all the Republic could gain by such a union," Mon said.

"I don't give a Sith what is to be gained! We will not gain anything at the cost of my daughter's happiness!" Anakin roared.

"Anakin's right and that still doesn't explain why they paid you so many credits," Padme added.

"Tell us now," Anakin said, his penetrating stare searing through the Chandrillian Senator.

"The payments...were for making sure Leia had no choice...but to agree to marry Isolder. In addition...the credits were to ensure the Queen's help in the next election. She promised that if I helped her...then she would see to it that I won the next election for Chancellor," Mon confessed shamefully.

"Plotting against my wife and manipulating my daughter. You realize that I'll make sure you never work in public service again, I hope," Anakin said.

"I assure you my legal team will do an excellent job of refuting your claims. A simple misdemeanor like this will get me probation; nothing more," Mon said smugly.

"Possibly, but you are, effective immediately, suspended from duty for six months pending an investigation into your dealings by the Jedi," Padme said. Mon glared at her, as the comm on her desk beeped.

"Yes Elle?" Padme asked.

"Milady, there is an urgent call coming from Cloud City. It concerns Senator Skywalker," Elle said.

"Put it through immediately," Padme answered. A few seconds later, Lando's face appeared.

"Lando!" Padme exclaimed.

"Hello Chancellor...Master Skywalker, you're awake!" Lando said in surprise.

"Yes I am, but just keep that a secret for now," Anakin said.

"Lando, is this about Leia and Han?" Padme asked.

"Yes, they were here, lying low. But Jaren, Isolder's aide, showed up with soldiers tonight. He also brought a bounty hunter, who captured Han," Lando began.

"What would a bounty hunter want with Han?" Anakin asked. Lando sighed.

"Well, a few years back, Han inadvertently got involved with smuggling for Jabba the Hutt. He wanted out, but kept sinking in debt. He owed Jabba money," Lando said.

"And that's why he came to me for a job," Anakin finished.

"Exactly," Lando replied.

"I would have paid his debt. He should have told me," Anakin said.

"He didn't want you to be disappointed in him," Lando replied.

"Lando, what happened tonight?" Padme asked.

"Jaren forced my technician to freeze Han in carbonite. Then, the bounty hunter took him. He's taking him to Jabba to collect the bounty on his head," Lando said.

"And Leia?" Anakin asked.

"Jaren kidnapped her and is on his way to Hapes with her. Isolder is going to force her to marry him even though the agreement was terminated," Lando said.

"Thank you Lando. We'll handle this now," Padme said, as the transmission blinked out. Padme stared at Mon.

"You knew about this, didn't you," Padme stated, for it was not a question.

"I beg your pardon, but I had no idea any of this was going on," Mon replied.

"You're lying...I can feel it. We have to go find our daughter, but Obi-Wan will escort you back to the Temple," Anakin said.

"Happily," Obi-Wan said, as he entered.

"I am going no where, except home," Mon refuted.

"You have no choice. You are under arrest," Obi-Wan replied.

"On what charges?" she demanded.

"So far, accepting illegal funds and conspiring to kidnap my niece. You'll be interrogated at the Temple," Obi-Wan said, as he put the stun cuffs on her and led her out.

"Good luck on Hapes. Keep me informed," he called.

"We will," Anakin called back, as Anna and Luke rushed in.

"We want to go with you," Luke said. Anakin smiled at them.

"Go get the droids and meet us at the ship in twenty minutes. We're leaving for Hapes...tonight," Anakin said. Twenty minutes later, the Sapphire Angel blasted through the Coruscant atmosphere and disappeared into the realm of hyperspace...

---

Jaren dragged Leia into the Hapes palace and pushed her into the quarters that were assigned to her, where Isolder was waiting.

"Thank you Jaren," Isolder said. He nodded curtly and faded into the background, carefully watching and unknowingly influencing Isolder's actions and words. Leia rubbed her sore wrist, as Isolder calmly approached her. He stared at her with a stern look and she decided he was attempting to hold his temper. He failed in that attempt and Leia yelped, as he slapped her. Tears stung her eyes and she whimpered, as she blinked them back.

"How dare you run off with that...scoundrel and embarrass me like that!" Isolder yelled, but Leia refused to look at him.

"Look at me!" he demanded, as he yanked her shoulders forward and her head up.

"I have nothing to say to you, slemo," Leia growled.

"Slemo? Now you even talk like the filthy scoundrel," he retorted.

"I love him and you're the only filth I see here!" Leia yelled. Isolder wrapped his hand around her neck.

"I was good to you. All I asked was for you to be my bride, preferably untouched, but I guess will have to settle for slightly used," he sneered.

"You bastard! How dare you..." Isolder cut her off.

"How dare I what? Call them like I see them? Call you the filthy little whore that you are? Do you really expect me to believe you didn't let the scoundrel have his way with you?" Isolder growled. Leia raised her fist to punch him, but he caught it and slapped her angrily again.

"You're marrying me tonight, so forget about your scoundrel," he said, shoving her to the floor.

"I will be sending the handmaidens to ready you for tonight's ceremony," Isolder said, as he and Jaren left. Once they were gone, Leia broke down in sobs. She was so afraid for Han and she missed him so much. She was also terrified about marrying Isolder, for he proved he had a violent streak and had proved he would spend the wedding night making her fearful of him. Sobs racked her petite shoulders.

"Oh daddy...I don't know where you are...but I need your help!" she pleaded to the Force.

"Please daddy...help me..." she sobbed uncontrollably.

*"Please daddy...help me..."*

Anakin's eyes snapped open, as he sat in the pilot's chair.

"Leia," he said, as he could sense his daughter's fear and distress through the Force.

"I'm coming princess," he promised.

"How much longer, Artoo?" he asked. Artoo whirled and clicked. Thirty minutes was what Anakin read on the translator.

"Ani, are you okay?" Padme asked. He smiled up at her.

"I'm okay, but I'll be better after we get Leia off Hapes," he replied, as he pulled her down into his lap.

"I'm so worried about her," Padme said.

"We'll be there soon and then we'll all be together again," he assured her.

"Ani...what about Han? Leia must be heart broken. And poor Han is in the clutches of the Hutts," Padme said.

"It'll be all right, angel. As soon as I can, I'll go after Han. I've got a bone to pick with Jabba anyhow," Anakin replied. Padme laid her head on his shoulder, as their ship streaked through hyperspace, nearing Hapes as the minutes passed quickly.

---

Leia was forcibly escorted to the Throne room. She was dressed in a simple, white shimmer silk gown. The handmaidens had braided her long hair and then wrapped it in an elaborate twist at the top of her head. But sadness marred Leia's beautiful face, as she was forced to stand beside Isolder.

"Please begin," Ta'a ordered to the Hapan priest. He cleared his throat.

"We are gathered her today to join these two, Prince Isolder and Leia Skywalker in holy matrimony. You may recite your vows accordingly," the priest said.

"You may skip that part," Ta'a ordered. The priest looked a little disturbed.

"Very well. Your highness, do you take this woman, Leia Skywalker, to be your wife?" he asked. Isolder smirked.

"I do," he answered.

"And do you, milady, take this man, Prince Isolder, to be your husband?" he asked.

"I most certainly do not. But he is forcing me to anyway," Leia bit angrily. The priest looked confused.

"Get on with it," Isolder demanded.

"As you wish, your highness. I...I suppose, by the power vested in me, I pronounce you..."

"STOP!" a male voice roared. Leia turned, along with the others and her eyes swam with tears. Her parents emerged arm in arm, flanked by her twin brother and her little sister.

"You forgot the part where you ask if someone objects to this union, because we most certainly do," Anakin said sternly.

"Daddy?" Leia asked in surprise. She wrenched her arm away from a stunned Isolder and sprinted to her family. Leia couldn't believe it. The last time she'd seen her father, he'd been very pale and motionless in a bed. And now, he was here, looking as healthy as ever.

"Daddy," she cried, as she hugged him tightly.

"It's okay princess...I really am here," he assured her. Leia was encompassed by a group hug from her mother and siblings, as her father noticed the marks on her face, shining through her make-up. He lifted his daughter's chin and examined the fresh, angry welts, before turning to Isolder. The prince felt the temperature in the room drop at least fifty degrees and he yelped in terror, as the large, durasteel pillars around him suddenly were damaged by a crack in each. Jaren slipped into the shadows and raised his comlink to his lips.

"Father...Skywalker is here..." Jaren whispered nervously.

*"I will send two demons to distract him. Escape to my ship with your fool of a brother and incompetent mother. We must adjust our plans accordingly,"* Palpatine said.

"Yes father," Jaren replied.

Isolder was white as a sheet, as Anakin stalked toward him, his eyes fixated upon the prince with an icy glare...

# Family of Warriors

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars.

AN: Here's chapter 13! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone III

Chapter 13: Family of Warriors

Anakin stalked dangerously toward the Prince of Hapes.

"I warned you to leave my daughter alone," Anakin growled. The Queen attempted to dispel what was becoming a volatile situation.

"Master Skywalker...you are well! This is wonderful news!" she attempted to sound delighted. Anakin's icy glare shifted to her momentarily.

"Tell me...how much was it going to cost you to buy the next election?" Anakin asked.

"I beg your pardon?!" Ta'a exclaimed in mock outrage.

"Are you really planning to place Mon Mothma in the Chancellor's seat or are you going to fill it with someone else, perhaps? A certain Sith Lord, maybe?" Anakin taunted. The Queen turned white as a sheet.

"I...I don't know what you're talking about," she stammered.

"Oh yes...you do. You're so deep in all this, you're slowly drowning," Anakin replied.

"I..." she was at a loss for words.

"You're involved with the Sith. You are working for Palpatine and I will find out everything! You can bet your credits on that!" Anakin yelled, as he turned back to Isolder.

"As for you, I think we're long overdue for a chat," Anakin said. Isolder motioned to some of his soldiers, who stepped in Anakin's way. The poor men were visibly nervous, for Anakin's presence was stifling them with fear.

"A coward through and through, I see," Anakin goaded.

"You are not welcome here and you and your family are intruding," Isolder said calmly.

"You kidnapped my daughter! No...you had someone else do the dirty work for you!" Anakin yelled.

"She broke our agreement and ran off with that scoundrel! You should be thanking me for reigning her in!" Isolder said.

"Han is like a son to me...and you've hurt him too. The minute I was out of commission you began trying to hurt my family. And I will find out why," Anakin promised, as he started toward Isolder again, even as the nervous soldiers blocked his way. He smirked.

"Move please..." he stated calmly. Isolder's mouth dropped open, as the soldiers headed the simple command and parted the way for him.

"Stay away from me!" Isolder cried.

"Not until I get some answers," Anakin yelled. Isolder tried to run, but an unseen force tripped him and he went skidding to the marble floor. Anakin grabbed his cape and yanked him up.

"Tell me what you know about the Sith!" Anakin demanded.

"N...nothing!" Isolder cried. Anakin sensed he was telling the truth. Isolder was simply a pawn, as he suspected. He knew the Queen

knew all about Palpatine...but she wasn't working alone.

"You're being manipulated and you have no clue. I almost feel sorry for you," Anakin said, as he kneed him in the gut.

"Almost...but you still hit my daughter and that is unforgivable," Anakin said.

"And as much as I would love to beat the living Sith out of you for touching her, you're so pathetic that you're not even worth it," Anakin said. Isolder looked relieved for a moment until Anakin lifted him up by his shirt and ignited his blade. Isolder looked like he was going to faint.

"But know this. If you come within a parsec of my daughter again, you'll be dead with one clean swipe of my blade. Never set foot on Naboo again and never come near my family again. If you do, I will kill you," Anakin said, as he extinguished his blade and released Isolder, who scrambled away from him. Suddenly, they heard a peculiar creaking in the ceiling. Screams ensued, as the ceiling busted open and a torrent of water poured down on them. Seeing through the raging water was impossible and Anakin lost sight of his family. Water filled the room and was already up to his chest and quickly rising.

"Padme! Leia!" he called, as he looked around frantically.

"Luke! Anna!" he called again, as suddenly he saw his youngest daughter surface. She coughed violently and Anakin swam to her.

"Daddy...a piece of plaster...hit mom on the head. She went under and I couldn't find her..." Anna cried. Anakin saw a large slab of duracrete floating in the water. He grabbed Anna around the waist and hauled her up onto it.

"Stay here," he told her, as he dove down to look for the rest. Anakin spotted the twins and they all surfaced.

"It's the water demon again," Luke said, as he gasped for air.

"Palpatine must know we're here. Take care of your sisters while I find your mother," Anakin said. Luke nodded, as he and Leia swam toward Anna. Anakin dove down, searching frantically for Padme. With no sign, he was forced to go up for air.

"Looking for this...Skywalker?" a voice rasped. He looked up to see Aurra Sing, the water demon, standing on a piece of floating duraplaster. She pulled her tentacle from the water, bringing Padme up for air. His wife coughed and gasped for air.

"Ani..." she whimpered, just before the demon plunged her underwater again.

"Let her go Sing!" Anakin roared.

"You'd like that, wouldn't you?" Aurra goaded, as she pulled Padme from the water again. Her tentacle lifted her out of the water and Sing coiled her other tentacle around Padme's petite body, constricting her.

"How would you like to die, dear Amidala? Would you prefer I drown you? Or crush your pretty bones to powder?!" Aurra snarled, as she squeezed Padme in her tentacles. Anakin drew his light saber and ignited the blade. Padme cried out, as Aurra squeezed her. Anakin aimed his blade and then expertly threw it. It spun beautifully, end over end, and it hit Aurra's tentacle, cutting it in half. The demon roared in rage, as Padme fell freely into the water. Anakin dove after her and they surfaced together. Padme coughed and clung to him tightly. Sing's rage became know, as water wraiths began attacking. Anakin used the Force to call his light saber to his hand and began to flight them off. Another piece of duraplaster floated by and he helped Padme onto it. She drew her blaster and began shooting at the wraiths. She screamed, as one slipped past Anakin and grabbed her from behind, trying to pull her into the water. She force it off and shot it in the head, while her husband continued to fend off dozens

more of the water gremlins. Aurra Sing growled, as she jumped onto Anakin and plunged them both underwater.

"Anakin!" Padme cried. Aurra Sing sneered at the Chosen One, as she squeezed him in her tentacles. He appeared to be unconscious already and she wondered how her Master would reward her for his death. But her victory was short lived, as his eyes suddenly snapped open. His eyes shined like two beacons of light and she recoiled from him immediately. They surfaced and Aurra sputtered, as she tried to look away. But his searing gaze was too powerful. Padme and their children watched, as Aurra screamed, holding her eyes in agony, as if they were on fire.

"No more innocent blood will be spilt by you. And by the power of the Force, your soul will be destroyed," Anakin said fiercely, as a light beam erupted from his palm. It hit Aurra and she screamed, as the white flames of the Force engulfed her. She melted into the water, as her essence had been completely expunged. Anakin held out his palm and released a shockwave of power, killing all the wraiths in its path.

"Luke, we're going to have to climb through the roof and then down the side of the building. Help your sisters," Anakin called.

"Good thing we parked the ship on the cliff overlooking the palace or it might be underwater. All these poor people and those cowards just left!" Padme said.

"Yeah...it definitely proves their involvement with the Sith," he replied, as he tossed his grappling cable up and secured it at the top.

"Okay angel, up you go," he said, as he lifted her up and she began scaling the wall. Once she was done, she sat off to the side on the roof and watched him climb up, helping him over when he reached her.

"Now that we're up, how are we going to get down?" Padme asked. Anakin glanced over at their children on the other side of the busted

roof and laughed.

"Like that. I taught him well," Anakin said. Luke had attached his grabbling cable to a lower tree in the courtyard. He then had attached his climbing harness to each of his sisters and sent them gliding to the ground one at a time. Padme watched, as their son secured himself on the cable and whooped, as he went sailing down through the air.

"Care to try it?" Anakin asked, as he secured his cable onto another tree below.

"Only if you take me down with you," she replied, cuddling close to his chest.

"Wouldn't have it any other way," he replied, as their lips met and they kissed passionately.

---

"Ah, can't they find a better place to do that later?" Luke complained.

"Oh leave them alone. We will be lucky if we're each in love with our spouse half as much as mom and dad are in twenty two years," Leia said wistfully. Luke looked at her like she had just grown Bantha horns.

"Okay, who are you and what have you done with my twin sister?" he asked.

"What is that supposed to mean?" she asked.

"Oh leave her alone, Luke. She's in love," Anna said.

"She is? With who?" he asked. Leia rolled her eyes.

"Are you *that* dense?" Anna scolded. He looked offended.

"What are you talking about?" he asked.

"If you can't figure it out, then I'm not telling you, dummy," Leia said.

"Well, excuse me for not keeping up with your social life, Senator Skywalker," Luke complained.

"It's Han, you Shaak butt," Anna scolded.

"Han?" Luke asked, before he burst out laughing. Leia frowned.

"What's so funny?" she asked defensively.

"You and Han used to HATE each other!" he laughed and then yelped, as Leia punched his arm.

"I was five, Nerfherder!" she yelled.

"Ouch...I'm kidding Leia. I'm happy for you," Luke said.

"Thanks," Leia said sadly, as she suddenly burst into tears. Luke looked frantic, wondering what he had done now. Anna glared at him and he suddenly remembered where Han was right now.

"Hey...it'll be okay Leia. We'll get him back," Luke said.

"Luke's right, princess. I will go after him as soon as I can," Anakin said, as he and Padme landed next to their children.

"Thanks daddy," Leia replied, with a watery smile. Suddenly, Leia screamed, as something grabbed her legs and tried pulling her into the ground. Luke and Anakin grabbed her arms and pulled her from the ground demon's grasp. Darth Malina snarled, as she rose, bringing dozens of wraiths with her.

"Great...more," Anakin growled, as he ignited his blade. Luke and Anna followed suit, flanking their mother and sister. Padme and Leia drew their blasters and stayed close to Anakin. Luke and Anna flanked off to either side to take a group of wraiths each. Malina growled and disappeared underground, as her wraiths attacked Anakin, Padme, and Leia with a vengeance. Anakin swiped his saber

furiously, cutting through dozens at a time. He was already sick of Palpatine's foolish games. He wanted to face the Sith Lord and he wanted to destroy him once and for all. Unfortunately, he would have to play Sidious' games until the Sith decided to show himself. And Anakin vowed that this time, he would not catch him off guard. The Skywalker's stopped fighting when all the wraiths were gone and waited for Malina to resurface.

"Stay close," he told his family, as they huddled together. Suddenly, the ground beneath their feet began to shake violently.

"A ground quake!" Luke exclaimed, as the ground beneath their feet began to crack and break apart.

"We're sinking!" Padme cried, as the piece of grassy dirt they stood upon slowly began to sink into the ground. Luke scrambled off the sinking trap and then held his hand out for the rest of his family. Suddenly, Malina grabbed Luke by the shirt and hauled him to his feet. She growled at him and fixated her glare upon him.

"You'll be my first victim...young Skywalker!" she hissed, as Luke's airway became constricted and he began to choke.

"Nooo...Luke!" Padme cried in terror.

"Stay here!" Anakin told his wife and daughters, as he used the Force to propel himself up. He flipped and landed on his feet in front of Malina, his eyes blazing brightly. Malina hissed and turned away from him.

"You won't kill me so easily...Chosen One! Not before I claim your son as my victim!" Malina screamed. Luke was turning blue and Anakin knew he had to act fast. The Force aura around Anakin glowed brightly and expanded around Malina and Luke. The demon began to panic, as the brightness of his power burned her cornea's. Luke gasped air into his lungs and she dropped him to the ground. He coughed and panted air into his lungs, as his color slowly returned. Malina growled and tried covering her face, as Anakin

calmly approached her. Malina screamed and Luke's eyes widened, as he saw the Sith demon's eyes. They were literally on fire with white flames.

"You may have defeated me...but my Master will destroy you!" she screamed, as the fire spread to her face. Luke scrambled away to help his mother and sisters up. Anna grabbed his hand first, followed by Leia and then Padme. They all watched in awe, as the white flames spread over her entire body, burning her soul to nothingness.

"I'll destroy your Master just like I've destroyed you. No more innocents will suffer at your hands. Tonight, you cease to exist..." Anakin said. Malina roared in rage, as her form became completely engulfed and eventually her scream was squelched, just as her very essence and soul was as well. The light faded and there was nothing...not a trace left of the demon. Padme knelt beside Luke and hugged him.

"Baby, are you okay?" she asked, as she smoothed his hair.

"Mom...I'm fine..." Luke complained in embarrassment, as his mother suddenly treated him as if he was five again. They all stood up and Anakin smiled, as his wife and daughters gathered around him in a family hug. Luke smiled, as his father pulled him in and his sisters squeezed him tightly in a hug of their own. Padme felt her eyes swim with tears. Her family was together again, just as it was supposed to be.

"Come on, let's get off this Force forsaken planet. Palpatine has likely sensed the destruction of his demons. We should go before he decides to send more," Anakin said.

"Do you really think Isolder and his mother escaped the planet and went to him?" Leia asked.

"I'm afraid it's very likely. Isolder was simply a pawn before tonight, but now I'm sure he's learning exactly what his mother has been up to," Anakin answered.

"But we still don't know who the apprentice is. Mom, did you know that Palpatine had a son?" Anna asked her mother.

"No sweetie. Palpatine either made sure his existence was a secret or he did not know about him. Though, I would venture a guess that it is the first one. Palpatine wouldn't have wanted anything to do with an infant and would have only wanted to make sure he was raised to know everything about the Sith," Padme said.

"You're right. He probably made sure his son was hidden away, likely on Korriban, since we know that his son studied the holocrons. He is the one that released Palpatine's soul from Sith hell...and had the Kaminoans clone his father," Anakin said.

"Ani...it is very likely that Palpatine himself ordered that the Kaminoans clone him in case he was killed. And then, he made sure his offspring spent his life studying the holocrons in order to perform the ritual," Padme replied.

"You might be right. If that's so though, who told him about the Clone?" Anakin asked.

"It would have had to been the person caring for his son all these years," Luke said.

"I wonder who his mother is? I mean, was she evil too? Or just a vessel? Did Palpatine kill her or was she loyal to him? Did she raise their son?" Leia wondered. Anakin stopped at his daughters words.

"What is it Ani?" Padme asked, as they reached the Sapphire Angel, atop the rocky cliff.

"Leia's on to something," Anakin said.

"I don't get it. Who would want to be with Palpatine?" Luke wrinkled his nose in disgust.

"Oh my goodness...it's Ta'a. She and Palpatine...were lovers," Padme said, looking as if she was going to be sick just by saying those words.

"Wait...you mean the Queen had Palpatine's baby?" Anna asked, also looking sick.

"It fits," Anakin replied.

"But...it can't be Isolder, can it?" Leia asked.

"No...it's definitely not Isolder. Isolder's father was the King of Hapes, which means that Ta'a had an affair with Palpatine before or after Isolder was born. Ta'a likely hid the child somehow," Padme said.

"But she would have kept him close...even if she could not acknowledge him in public," Anakin replied. Then it struck Leia like a bolt of Force lightning.

"Jaren..." she exclaimed.

"What?" Luke asked.

"It's Jaren..." Leia said, looking her family.

"What makes you think that, sweetheart?" Padme asked.

"I...when he captured us on Bespin, I saw his eyes flash yellow for a brief second. I thought I had imagined it...but when he slapped me, I felt electricity behind his hand. It's Jaren, daddy...he's the Sith apprentice!" Leia said. Anakin nodded.

"It certainly fits. The Queen has had him disguised as Isolder's aide all these years. No one would suspect. If he's anything like his father, then he would have been very good at hiding his true identity," Anakin said.

"So...if we're right, Jaren is the son of Palpatine and the Queen Mother of Hapes," Padme concluded. Anakin nodded.

"But why have they been sending these demons after us? If they're so powerful, then why haven't they tried to take over yet?" Luke asked.

"Because Palpatine is extremely patient and his plans always take careful planning and require him to bide a lot of time. It took him thirteen years last time before he revealed his ultimate plan and made his move. He won't take nearly as long this time, but he is planning something big, we can be sure of that," Anakin said.

"The question is what? We know that his ultimate goal is to take over the Republic and create an Empire upon which he has complete control over," Padme said.

"Yes, but it is how he will achieve this that remains a mystery," Anakin added.

"Then we have to find out what he's doing!" Luke exclaimed. Anakin smiled thinly.

"Easier said then done, son. Palpatine is so masterful that it is likely we will not know what he is going to do until he has already begun," Anakin said.

"Then...how are we going to defeat him?" Luke asked.

"We train to be prepared and to be ready. And we investigate every angle we can, starting with Jaren's past," Anakin said.

"Are we going to Coruscant right away?" Leia asked.

"We'll be making a short stop on Naboo to drop Anna off and then we'll head for Coruscant the following morning," Anakin told them. The Skywalker family strapped into their seats, as Anakin took them up. They left Hapes behind, hopefully for good, and disappeared into hyperspace...

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The small shuttle slowly descended into the docking bay of the massive ship. Isolder was at a loss for words and completely confused as to why they were here.

"What is going on? Where are we?" he asked.

"Shut up," Jaren snapped.

"How dare you talk to me like that?! What has gotten into you, Jaren?" Isolder asked. The prince never saw Jaren's fist coming until it had already connected with his jaw.

"I said shut up, you little bastard!" Jaren yelled.

"Mother...how can you let him do this?!" Isolder cried, as his lip trickled blood.

"You are such a coward, Isolder. At least my Jaren is not like that," Ta'a said, as she stepped down the ramp and smirked at the figure awaiting them. Jaren grabbed Isolder by the tunic and dragged him down the ramp. As Isolder saw Palpatine there, he suddenly became even more frightened.

"It's true then. You are involved with the Sith, mother!" he cried.

"Of course it's true, you little nuisance. Jaren is the son I bore with the greatest ruler the galaxy has ever seen! The true prince! You were just an unfortunate mistake that I had to put up with all these years, thanks to those damned Skywalkers!" she yelled.

"What?...how can this be?" Isolder said, at a loss for words.

"This means I have to put up with you no more. The roles have been reversed and you'll be serving me," Jaren said.

"I will not help you! Anakin was right and I will not serve you! I am the Prince of Hapes! My father was King!" Isolder cried.

"Your father was as worthless as you are. That's why I mother and I poisoned him, so we could get rid of him," Jaren said evilly.

"You...you killed my father!" Isolder exclaimed. He had been small when his father died of the Bothan influenza he had been told. But now that he learned that it was all a lie, he wondered how much else he did not know.

"Yes...he was interfering with Mother's plans and was suspicious of me. We had to be rid of him. Now, if you will not help us...then you will die," Jaren said, as he ignited his crimson blade.

"What will it be, brother? Will you stand at my side or will I get the pleasure of slicing your worthless head off?" Jaren asked. Isolder panicked at the sight of the crimson blade.

"Please...don't kill me. I'll do...whatever you want!" Isolder pleaded for his life. Jaren extinguished his blade and returned it to his belt.

"Good choice, you sniveling coward. Now, pick yourself up and follow us," Jaren said, as his boots sounded thickly on the durasteel.

"Two of our demons are dead," Palpatine said, as his son walked in stride with him, as Ta'a and Isolder followed them.

"Yes, it is unfortunate. But our other demons will be more difficult for him and should provide us with enough distraction, particularly if we send the wind demon after Amidala again," Jaren said.

"Yes...and we still have the fire and ice demons. They are more powerful than the rest and will not be so easily defeated. And when the time comes, we shall crush the entire Skywalker family...for good this time," Palpatine said. Jaren smirked evilly.

"Yes, things are going well. Except having young Leia to hold over Anakin's head would have been useful," Palpatine said.

"Yes, it is unfortunate that Isolder fowled that up. But there will be other opportunities to attack his children," Jaren said. Palpatine laughed evilly.

"Yes...yes there will be. Come," he ordered, as they reached the bridge of the massive Star Destroyer...

# Return to Coruscant

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars.

AN: Here's chapter 14! Enjoy and thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone III

Chapter 14: Return to Coruscant

Anakin sat back in the pilot's seat with a sigh.

"Keep an eye on things, Artoo," Anakin said, as he headed back into the ship's spacious living area. He smiled, as he spotted all three of his kids sleeping on the large, comfortable floor cushions in the living area. There were plenty of beds, but he sensed that none of them really wanted to be alone. He smiled at his wife, who was curled up on the sofa with a blanket, watching them.

"Cold?" he asked.

"A little," she replied, with a yawn.

"I think I can help with that," he said, as he kicked off his shoes and tossed his leather jerkin aside, while unbuttoning the top few buttons on his dark brown tunic. He undid his bulky utility belt and set it aside before cuddling under the blanket with her. He wrapped his arms around her and Padme cuddled close to him.

"Much better," she said.

"I remember you telling me on my first trip that space is a cold place," he mentioned.

"You remember that?" she asked. He smiled at her.

"Of course I do. I remember everything about you. Ever since the day you walked into Watto's junk shop, you've been my whole world," he told her. She smiled and kissed her lips softly.

"And you've always been my world too, even if it took ten years for me to realize it," she replied, with a smile.

"It seems like a life time ago, so much has happened," Anakin said.

"A lot of good things and some not good," Padme replied.

"Definitely a lot of good," he said, motioning to their kids. Padme smiled.

"I'll definitely agree with that, I'll never forget the day you walked into my office. You looked at me with those blue eyes and that smoldering gaze I love and you claimed my heart in that instant," she said.

"Well, I have a little confession then. I was beyond nervous about seeing you again. I dozed off in my ship on the way to Naboo and had a horrible nightmare about walking in and seeing that you were already in the arms of another man. I walked into your office that day being fully prepared to have my heart broken," he replied. She caressed his cheek.

"You never told me that," she said.

"Well, I don't like to admit that I have nightmares, angel. I like for you to think of me as strong and confident, but that's not always how it was before we met again," he replied.

"Well, you had nothing to worry about, because we had an instant connection the moment we saw each other. Physically and emotionally. And I have always thought of you as strong and confident. Having a nightmare would not have changed that, because I also find you handsome...and irresistible...and sexy," she replied, with a smirk.

"Yes...we certainly wasted no time in exploring the physical side of our relationship," he said in a husky voice, as he kissed her neck. She giggled, as he blew in her ear and quickly covered her mouth, so as not to wake the kids.

"Those first few days together were amazing...and so was our first night together. Do you remember?" she asked.

"How could I forget? My fantasy came true that night," he replied.

"It was wonderful. We were so young and nervous," she smiled at the memory.

"Don't forget inexperienced and clumsy," he retorted.

"You were wonderful. You made me feel so loved...so beautiful," she replied. He smiled gently.

"You still do...and I'm sure you always will. No one else could ever make me feel the way you do and I could never love another," she paused, as he pressed a kiss to her forehead.

"These last few months, I felt like I was dying inside without you. Seeing you in my dreams kept me alive, because I had hope that you would return to me. I know for certain that I could not live without you," she said.

"But I'm here now and I'm not going anywhere," he assured her.

"But you still have to face them...the Sith," she said, as tears welled in her eyes.

"I'm ready this time Padme. They will not ambush me again...and I will vanquish them all," he promised.

"I will still worry...you know me," she replied.

"Yes...very well in fact. You've always worried about me and you make me feel so loved that way. It was never often, being a slave as

a child, that anyone besides my mother cared about what became of me," he paused, as he chuckled.

"What?" she asked.

"I even remember the time you almost worried yourself sick after I got into that cantina brawl with Sebulba," Anakin laughed.

"It was not funny. That nasty Dug tried to kill you. And you did not seem at all concerned," she replied.

"That was nothing. Sebulba used to beat the living Sith out of me until I grew bigger and stronger than him. It was pretty much a way life on Tatooine," he replied.

"Well, it was terrible they were allowed to do such things to you," Padme pouted.

"But I was fine. You patched me up, remember?" he wriggled his eyebrows slyly. She giggled, clearly remembering their passionate romp that afternoon, so long ago.

"Oh I remember," she replied, with a sultry smile.

"I also remember being caught making out on your workbench the next day by Owen," she said.

"Yeah, he never let us live that down. I cherish every memory we've made together and I always will. I'll continue to fight for you and our children. We'll always be together," he promised.

"I know. And I also cherish all our memories and I always will as well. Especially those three, for I'll never forget how much happiness and love they bring us," she said. He smiled and glanced at their grown and nearly grown children.

"Me either," he replied, then grinned slyly.

"Speaking of making out. They are asleep and we are alone," he hinted. She giggled and wrapped her arms around his neck.

"I thought you'd never ask," she replied, as their lips met passionately. They settled into each other's arms, as their lips moved over each other's with passionate intent. It was many kisses later when they finally fell asleep in each other's arms...

---

The Skywalker family arrived on Naboo a few hours later. They all went to bed for a few more hours before they awoke that morning on Naboo. Anna was garbed in full regalia required of the Queen, as she prepared to return to her duties. Watching the rest of her family leave was not so easy this time. She hugged her mother tightly, as they stood on the landing pad.

"I'll miss you," Anna said.

"We'll miss you too baby, but we'll be back to visit soon," Padme promised. Anna nodded.

"Take care of her Chewy," Padme said, patting his hand. Chewy rawled, nodding his head.

"Stay out of trouble, baby sis," Luke said, as he hugged her.

"You too," she replied.

"Hey, you know me," he replied, with a smirk.

"I know, that's why I said it," she replied.

"Do well baby sis. And don't let parliament push you around, because they think they are smarter merely because of age," Leia said, speaking from experience.

"Hey, I'm a Skywalker. We're fighters," Anna replied. Leia smiled and nodded. Anakin came to her, she hugged him tightly and could not

help the few tears that cascaded down her painted cheeks.

"I love you daddy," she cried.

"Hey, it's okay little angel. I'm not going anywhere this time. We'll be back before you know it," he promised. She smiled and nodded. Anakin moved to Chewy and patted his arm.

"As soon as I can, I'm going after Han. I promise," he told the Wookie. He chuckled, as Chewy hugged him. They all reluctantly waved goodbye to the youngest member of their family and boarded the ship again. Anna watched the ship until she could no longer see it...

---

Padme sat in the co-pilot seat, as Anakin began their decent onto Coruscant. As they neared the Temple, they could see Holonet reporters swarming around the landing pad.

"Looks like our secret is out. Do you think it was someone on Hapes that told the Holonet?" Padme asked.

"Oh, I'm sure it was. I had to give my real name and codes to get landing clearance and dozens saw us there on the landing pad," Anakin said. Padme nodded, remembering the shocked faces, as those bystanders witnessed their arrival on Hapes. The Skywalkers disembarked and the reporters fired questions a mile a minute, as Anakin and his family pushed their way through and into the Temple.

"It's good to see all of you. The Council is waiting, so we better head that way," Obi-Wan said. The four of them followed Obi-Wan up to the Council chambers.

---

"Welcome back, Master Skywalker," Yoda said, upon their entrance. The other Council members, even Mace, smiled at him. He smiled back and bowed.

"Thank you Master," he replied.

"Much you have to tell us, I'm sure," Yoda said.

"Yes Master. A lot happened in our short time on Hapes," Anakin replied.

"Come then. Sit and tell us," Yoda motioned to the four vacant chairs.

"Good it is to see you safe, young Leia. Sorry I am that young Han is not here will us. But rescued , he will be," Yoda said.

"Thank you, Master," she replied. Yoda chuckled for a moment.

"Frightened I'm sure Isolder was, when saw Anakin coming, I think," Yoda chuckled. Luke snorted.

"He was practically bawling like a baby," Luke chuckled.

"Do you still believe Isolder is connected to the Sith?" Mace asked.

"I searched his feelings and he is a pawn, just as we suspected. However, Queen Chume is involved even more than we expected," Anakin replied.

"So, she truly kept Isolder in the dark about it?" Mace asked. Anakin nodded.

"We think we know who Palpatine's son is and why the Queen is so deeply involved," Anakin said, as he proceeded to explain about Isolder's supposed aide, Jaren. When he finished, the other Jedi were stunned.

"Unfortunately, we don't have the proof we need of this, though we are positive about this theory," Padme said.

"Agree with your theory, we do. Gain proof, we must. Investigate, we will. Go to Korriban I will with Master Kenobi and young Jayden and

Jeena. Go to Kamino, you and Luke will," Yoda said.

"I plan to go with Anakin as well," Padme said.

"I don't know if that's such a good idea," Anakin replied.

"If the Kaminoans did Clone Palpatine, I want to know what else they've been up to for the last twenty years. I'm going, unless you'd rather leave me here with the wind demon on the loose," she said.

"You're going," he agreed. Yoda chuckled.

"Settled that is then. Destroyed two demons you have, you say?" Yoda asked.

"Yes Master, the water and the ground demons. I fear the remaining ones may be stronger than the first two, but I'm confident I can defeat them, as well as Palpatine and his son," Anakin said.

"Easy it will not be. But confident I am as well," Yoda concluded the meeting.

Kira felt her heart leap, as Luke's speeder landed on the veranda of her apartment. She ran into his open arms and he spun her around.

---

"You're back! Is everyone okay?" she asked.

"Leia is. But Han was captured by a bounty hunter," Luke replied. Kira frowned.

"A bounty hunter? What would a bounty hunter want with Han?" she asked. Luke sighed.

"It's a long story. I have a lot to tell you before I leave again in the morning," he said.

"You're leaving again so soon?" she asked. He nodded.

"Mom, dad, and I are going to Kamino tomorrow," he answered.

"I assume this has something to do with the Sith then?" she asked. He nodded.

"I wanted to come be with you for tonight, before I have to leave again. We shouldn't be gone long though," Luke replied. She nodded and wrapped her arms around his neck. Luke leaned in and captured her lips in a tender kiss. She smiled and took his hand.

"Come on. Let's go change and then go find a quiet place for dinner. You can tell me everything and then we can come back here...and be alone," she said.

"Sounds perfect," he replied with a smile, as they went to the bedroom to clean up for dinner out.

---

"And that's how it happened," Luke said, as he sipped at his wine.

"They just burst into white flames?" Kira asked in amazement.

"Yeah, it was incredible. And you should have seen Isore. He was shaking in his designer boots," Luke laughed.

"Well, he deserves everything he gets after what he did to Leia. I can't imagine what she's going through right now," Kira said.

"I know, she's pretty depressed. But she knows dad is going to rescue him," Luke replied.

"Good. Leia deserves to be happy. I've been hoping she would be as lucky as I am in love," Kira said, smiling at him. He smiled back.

"I think that's our cue to go home," Luke said, as he pulled her chair out.

"Reading my mind again?" she asked playfully, as he slipped her wrap over her shoulders. They paid for their meal and walked

outside to their speeder. Luke helped Kira in and then hopped into the driver's seat before speeding off into busy residential traffic. As he drove, he suddenly felt something tingling his senses...something dark. He lurched the speeder violently, causing Kira to cry out in alarm, as a lightning bolt struck the speeder behind them. The poor soul inside never had a chance, as his vehicle burst into flames.

"Fett..." Luke uttered, as he slammed the throttle down. He reached over and tightened Kira's safety belt.

"Hang on. I'm going to try and lose him," Luke said, as he began swerving in and around traffic. But being that the lightning demon could move extremely fast, he only continued to gain on Luke. A bolt of lightning clipped the speeder and collided with some trash canisters, causing debris to fly everywhere.

"A sharp, blunt object slammed Kira in the forehead, knocking her unconscious, as they came to rest in the dirty alleyway. The broken speeder smoked and Luke slowly came around.

"Kira!" Luke exclaimed, as he saw the blood on her forehead and the side of her face. He was relieved which he found a steady pulse, but that relief was quickly replaced by the dark presence that was invading his senses. Luke stumbled out of the speeder and ignited his blade, as Fett descended on him. He swiped his blade clumsily, thanks to the dizziness and disorientation he was suffering from the crash. Luke screamed in agony, as he felt a bolt of Fett's lightning strike him from behind. He slumped painfully to his hands and knees.

"Your father is powerful...but his greatest weakness is the people he loves," Jango snarled, as he stomped on Luke's back, shoving him face down on the filthy duracrete.

"My Masters have decided to exploit that weakness by taking those he loves from him," Jango explained, as he kicked Luke in his side. The young Jedi groaned in pain. He grabbed the boy's hair and pulled him up to his knees.

"You're first. And your mother and sisters are will follow. We will relish dangling your worthless lives in front of him," Jango said. Luke cried out in pain, as Jango punched him twice in the face, blackening his eye and bloodying his nose and lips.

"Let the game begin," Jango sneered. Luke screamed in agony, as the Sith demon pumped a jolt of lightning into his body. The young Jedi's scream ceased, as he slumped unconscious at Fett's feet. The Sith demon hauled the young man up and threw him over his shoulder. Kira whimpered painfully and opened her eyes. Through her bleary vision, she saw her beloved draped over a large man's shoulder. She watched helplessly, as the man, a demon, she assumed, vanished with a flash of lightning right before her eyes..

"No..." her voice was raspy and weak. She tried sitting up, but a wave of dizziness and nausea assaulted her violently. She slumped painfully to the seat, unconsciousness took her again...

---

"Daddy, I'll be fine. I'll have security watching my apartment around the clock," Leia told her father.

"Sorry princess, but I'd rather you stay in the Temple with your mother and I. It's the safest place right now," Anakin insisted.

"If Luke doesn't have to stay, then why should I?" she protested.

"Because you don't always carry your light saber with you, which I really think you should start doing," Anakin said.

"Well, it's back at my apartment, so I guess I'll be going now," Leia insisted.

"That wont be necessary sweetheart. I already sent Scout to get your things and bring them back here. You're staying in the Temple...and that's final," he replied. Leia let out a frustrated yell and stomped off to her quarters in the Temple.

"Well, that went well," Padme said. Anakin smirked.

"For Leia, I'd say that was a rather mellow reaction," he replied.

"She's mad...but she also knows you're right. She knows she's safest here with all the demons running around," Padme said.

"Yeah...maybe we should call and Luke and tell him and Kira to come back here. I'd feel better if they were close by too," Anakin said. Padme smiled.

"That sounds like a very good idea," Padme replied, as she kissed him tenderly. Suddenly, Anakin felt a wave of fear and panic ripple through the Force. He heard his son's agonized scream ringing in his ears and he pulled away from Padme abruptly.

"Luke!" he cried.

"Ani...what is it? What's wrong?" she asked.

"They're attacking Luke!" Anakin cried, as he grabbed her hand and started running for the nearest landing pad. They jumped into a speeder and Anakin sped off, searching the Force for his son's force signature.

---

Anakin sped into the dingy alley, which was where he had last sensed Luke.

"Ani...look!" Padme exclaimed. Luke's mangled speeder could be seen at the far end of the alley. Anakin pulled close and cut the engines. Padme jumped out and began searching the area.

"Luke! Luke!" she cried frantically. Anakin jumped out and spotted Kira in the speeder. He examined the wound on her head and then checked for her pulse.

"Oh please...tell me she's not..." Padme couldn't finish the sentence.

"No, she's alive. But she has a nasty concussion. We need to get her to Bant," Anakin said, as he carefully lifted the young girl into his arms and placed her gently in the backseat of their speeder.

"Luke! Luke!" Padme cried frantically.

"He's not here, Padme," Anakin said, as he knelt down and picked up Luke's abandoned light saber. It sparked and shocked Anakin.

"Ouch..." he hissed, as he clipped his son's saber to his belt.

"The lightning demon attacked them...and I think he took Luke with him," Anakin said, as he took her gently in his arms.

"No...not one of our babies! Oh please no..." Padme sobbed, fearing that her son might be dead.

"He's alive, angel," he assured her.

"He's not any good to them dead. It's me they want. And...they're going to get me. I'll find our son...and make them pay for hurting us," Anakin said, as he rocked his crying wife.

"We need to get Kira to the Healer's ward. We'll find him Padme, I promise," he told her. She dried some of her tears and nodded.

"I know," she replied, as she climbed into the back of the speeder and elevated Kira's head in her lap. As Anakin sped off, she tore a piece of cloth from her cloak and dabbed the bloody, angry gash on her head, pressing gently and applying pressure. Kira whimpered.

"Luke..." she moaned painfully. A few more tears cascaded down Padme's cheeks, as she silently prayed that the Force would protect her baby boy...wherever he was...

# Kamino's Deception

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars.

AN: Here's chapter 15! Enjoy and thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone III

Chapter 15: Kamino's Deception

Kira slowly opened her eyes and through her blurry vision, she saw her father standing over her. He looked worried and pale, as he clutched her hand.

"Kira, can you hear me?" he asked.

"Daddy?" she asked hoarsely.

"Thanks the stars. I've been worried sick," he said, his voice choking back a sob.

"Where am I?" she asked.

"You're at the Temple, sweetheart. Do you remember anything?" Bail asked. Kira thought for a moment and suddenly it all came rushing back to her.

"Luke...Luke is gone..." she said, as she started to cry.

"You need to stay calm, young one. That is quite the nasty bump on your head," Bant said, as she walked in.

"Luke's parents...do they know?" Kira asked. Bail nodded.

"They're the ones that found you. Anakin sensed that Luke was in danger, but they arrived too late. The Jedi are already combing the galaxy, but we have no leads on his whereabouts yet. Anakin and

Padme went to Kamino, hoping to find more answers there until they get a lead on Luke. Leia is under heavy guard here in the Temple and a larger team of Jedi was sent to Naboo to guard Anna," Bail informed her. A look of hopelessness marred Kira's beautiful face and her father hugged her.

"They'll find him, honey. Anakin and Padme will find their son and they'll find him alive. I've heard talk among some of the Jedi and no one has sensed Luke's death. I've heard other's say that his Force presence is being masked with y-something. I can't remember the strange word they used. But Anakin will not let them kill his son. They'll find him and bring him home," Bail assured her. Kira clung to her father and quietly cried on his shoulder.

---

Anakin stared numbly out the cockpit window, as their ship zoomed through hyperspace. He heard Artoo wooo sadly beside him, snapping him out of his daze. He patted the little droid on him domed head.

"We'll find him, Artoo. Keep an eye on things, "Anakin said, as he walked back into the dimly lit cabin. Padme had fallen asleep on the sofa, clutching Luke's cloak that had been left behind in his wrecked speeder. Her beautiful face was stained with tears and he knew she'd cried herself to sleep. He felt like crying himself, for he hated feeling helpless when one of their babies was in danger. He could still faintly sense Luke, but not nearly enough to be able to tell where he was. That made Anakin believe his presence was being hidden with ysalamir creatures, probably on Palpatine's orders. He clenched his teeth in anger when he thought of Palpatine and how he was pulling everyone's strings again like a grand Puppet Master. Anakin knew hate was wrong...but he hated Palpatine and he wanted to make him pay. It was like a cruel game for him. He was making sure Anakin could not find Luke until he wanted him to by using Ysalamir, but yet Palpatine was making sure to project Luke's emotions into the Force for him to sense. And it was happening again. Luke was scared, in pain from the torture he was receiving, and he was feeling

hopeless. He knew not where he was; only that his captor delighted in his pain. Luke's screams were haunting him. He cried out to Anakin through their father/son bond. Anakin tried to send him waves of comfort and love, but he felt them being blocked. He tried harder, but to no avail

*"Leave my son alone! It's me you want! Stop torturing him and face me, you coward!"* Anakin screamed into the Force. He only heard an evil chuckle in response. Anakin recognized the raspy, throaty laugh as belonging to Palpatine. It was followed by another of Luke's painful screams.

*"Father...help me please!" Luke pleaded into the Force.*

*"Luke...I'm here! I will come for you! I will find you!"* Anakin cried. His response was met with another cry of agony from his boy.

*"He can't hear you..." Palpatine goaded.*

*"Tell me where he is, you bastard!" Anakin screamed in his mind.*

*"I'll tell you when I'm good and ready to, Chosen scum. Then, you can watch all your children and your wife die, before I kill you as well!" Palpatine screamed back.* The connection was severed and Anakin was back to feeling only trace emotions from his son. He felt relief from Luke, however, as it seemed his captor had ceased torturing him for the time being. He looked to his sleeping wife and decided that she did not need to know what their son was going through...not yet anyway. He looked at his wrist chrono and saw that they would be coming out of hyperspace over Kamino in thirty minutes. He knelt beside his beloved wife and gave her a gentle shake.

"Angel, wake up," he prodded. She opened her red, puffy eyes and looked up at him.

"Are we there?" she asked in a sleepy tone.

"We will be in about thirty minutes," he said. She sat up and he sat down beside her, opening his arms. She gladly accepted the invitation and cuddled against him. They held each other in silence, before Padme got up to go freshen up after giving him a tender kiss. Anakin sighed dejectedly, as he headed back to the cockpit to bring them out of hyperspace.

---

Anakin set the ship down on the wet landing pad on the watery world of Kamino. Rain was pouring down in sheets and the seas churned violently, as thunder boomed loudly and lightning lit up the sky.

"Lovely weather they have here," Padme said, with an air of sarcasm. He smirked.

"Yeah, it's a real tourist attraction," he joked. She pulled the hood of her thick blue cloak over her head and he raised the hood of his black cloak. They joined hands, as Artoo lowered the ramp.

"My comlink is on, Artoo. Call me if anything goes wrong," Anakin said, as he and Padme sprinted down the ramp and across the platform to the nearest building entrance. They stepped inside and dropped their soaked hoods. A tall, rail thin Kaminoan glided toward them.

"Greetings, I am Taun We. May I ask the reason for your visit here?" she questioned.

"I'm Jedi Knight Anakin Skywalker and this is my wife, Chancellor Padme Amidala-Skywalker. We have some questions to ask you about your facility. May we please speak to Prime Minister Lama Su?" Anakin asked. She hesitated and Anakin sensed her apprehension.

"Wait here a moment and I will see if the Prime Minister is available for a meeting," Taun We said, as she glided out of the lobby and into the hallway.

"Our presence definitely unnerves her. They're hiding something," Anakin said.

"I send a diplomat here annually to inspect the facility for any illegal Cloning activity. Never has anyone turned up anything suspicious," Padme said.

"Yes, but they always know when the diplomat is coming. They haven't had any time to hide anything from us," Anakin replied.

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"Master," Prime Minister Lama Su bowed before the hologram of Sidious.

"What is so urgent?" Sidious hissed.

"Master, Chancellor Amidala and her husband are here asking questions," Lama Su said.

"Then answer their questions, you fool. And if those meddlesome fools persist, then take care of the problem. I have instructed you to what must done should Skywalker come there," Sidious hissed. Lama Su looked horrified and bowed his head sadly.

"Yes Master," he said, as the transmission blinked out.

The Prime Minister will see you now," Taun We stated, as she appeared in the doorway.

"This way please," she motioned. Anakin and Padme followed her through the narrow corridor of the stark white facility. They came to a room and Taun We motioned them inside. Sitting behind a neat, impeccably clean desk was Prime Minister Lana Su. The distress was rolling off him in waves, Anakin sensed and his hands shook, as he motioned for them to sit.

"Chancellor Amidala, Master Skywalker, it is an honor to meet with you. What may I help you with?" he asked.

"You can start by telling us why you broke Republic law and cloned a dangerous Sith Lord," Anakin stated, not bothering with the pleasantries. Padme gave her husband a look. Sometimes, he honestly had no tact. The poor alien leader was shaking now.

"Prime Minister, you are not in any trouble. We know how persuasive the Sith can be and how merciless Palpatine is. We can help you though if he has forced you to work for him," Padme stated.

"I'm afraid I don't know what you are talking about. The Republic banned Cloning twenty years ago. I assure you this facility does not have any illegal activity. We manufacture only ships and weaponry now for the Republic Navy to utilize," Lama Su said.

"You are lying, Prime Minister. I can feel it. If Palpatine has threatened you, the Jedi can protect you. But only if you help us get the answers we need," Anakin stated.

"I have nothing to tell you than what I've already said. Now, please see yourselves out. I have much work to do," Lama Su said coldly. Anakin and Padme stood and walked toward the door.

"Then if you have nothing to hide, you won't mind if we tour your facility," Anakin said.

"Unfortunately, I cannot let you do that. I am sorry," the Prime Minister stated, as he pressed a switch underneath his desk. Anakin and Padme cried out, as a trap door opened under their feet and sent them plummeting through. They landed hard in a small, dingy dungeon cell. The hatch above them closed with thick bars sealing them in.

"I guess Palpatine was expecting us to come here," Padme stated, as he helped her up.

"Yeah. The question is, what doesn't he want us to find?" Anakin asked.

"How are we going to get out of here?" she asked.

"Up is the only way," Anakin replied. Padme watched, as he used the Force to jump up to the barred hatch above them. He grabbed it with one hand and drew his saber with the other. He ignited the blade and began the painstaking process of sawing through the thick bars. He began sawing around the edges and soon was a quarter of the way done. Suddenly, Padme heard a loud creak, like the sound of a piece of machinery being activated.

"What was that?" Anakin called.

"I don't know, but I have a bad feeling about this," she said, as she glanced around the room. Suddenly, she saw two very small hatches open on either side of the room. Padme yelped in surprise, as the realized that they were hydro pumps when they began to pump water into the room. It gushed in at an alarming rate.

"Ani, they're trying to drown us!" Padme cried. He looked down and saw his wife up to her knees in water. He had the hatch sawed half way through.

"Hang on angel, I'll have us out of here soon," he called, as he continued sawing through the bars. Finally the hatch hung open by a thread and Anakin stretched his hand out to his wife. Padme felt herself being lifted into the air. She reached her husband and he pushed her through the opening and into the bent corridor. They had fallen several levels and she guessed they were in the bowels of the compound.

"He tried to kill us!" Padme exclaimed, as they began crawling through the labyrinth of vents.

"No doubt on Palpatine's orders. There is something here he doesn't want us to find," Anakin said. They finally found an exit to the vents. Anakin sliced through the cover and they climbed through, before sprinting toward the lift.

"We should find some answers on the production levels," Anakin said, as he hit the button and lift ascended through the floors.

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Anakin and Padme crouched and peered over the railing. Below, an intricate system of machines and Kaminoan engineers worked diligently in producing vehicles and weaponry, but what they were seeing was like nothing the Republic used. Padme looked up at what looked like a walking, monstrous gun ship to her. There were smaller, but no less frightening weapons and dozens of strange looking fighter ships. Anakin put his scanner over his eyes and began recording the images they were seeing.

"They're building ships and weapons for Palpatine. He probably already has some hidden elsewhere," Anakin said.

"It must be what he plans to use to take over. There is enough explosive chemicals in this place to bring down a whole planet...just like the Death Star! Ani, he's building weapons that can wield some of the destructive power of the Death Star," she said.

"And Cloning is too risky, so it's a fair bet that he has Cato-Neimodia operating their droid factories again. But...droids don't make for very creative pilots," Anakin said.

"Well, if it's not droids and it's not Clones, then where would he get the needed pilots?" she wondered. Then it struck Anakin like lightning.

" *That's* why he needs Isolder! He commands the Hapan military!" Anakin exclaimed.

"But...the Hapan soldiers aren't like Clones. Wouldn't they rebel against Isolder if they thought they were fighting for an evil cause?" Padme asked.

"The Hapan soldiers are completely obedient to Isolder. He could feed them any sort of explanation for what they were doing and

they'd buy it," Anakin said.

"What are we going to do?" Padme asked.

"We're going to corner Lama Su and arrest him. Then, we'll contact the Temple and have a military garrison sent with Jedi commanders to take over and secure this facility so Palpatine can't use it anymore," Anakin said. She looked at him incredulously.

"What?" he asked.

"Nothing, I'm just a little surprised, that's all. You're going by the book. I was expecting more like, "Let's blow the place up," from you," she teased. He smirked.

"Believe me, it's tempting. And I do like blowing things up. But those workers down there are probably innocent in all this. They're just doing their jobs. I doubt Lama Su has told them that all this is for Palpatine and not the Republic," Anakin said.

"Very true," she replied, as he led her along the empty corridor until they found an empty conference room. Anakin took out his comlink and spoke into it.

"Artoo, lock onto my signal and open a channel, "care of the Old Folks Home," and transmit all the images I'm sending you," Anakin said, as he transmitted the captured images through Padme's datapad.

---

Anakin and Padme's holograms shimmered to life in the Council Room. Yoda, Mace, Obi-Wan, Shaak Ti, Whie Malreaux, Kit Fisto, and Aayla Secura were present.

"Anakin, we're receiving your images. Have you determined what it is they are building?" Mace asked.

"Definitely weapons, vehicles, and ships for Palpatine. Lama Su attempted to kill us, so we haven't got much out of him yet. But I'm going to arrest him and interrogate him. I suggest you send a garrison with a few Jedi commanders to secure this place from Palpatine's grasp," Anakin said.

"Agree I do. Master Ti, Master Fisto, and Master Secura will leave with a garrison of Republic Navy Officers at once," Yoda stated. The three Masters rose and bowed, before excusing themselves.

"Good work, both of you. Anakin, arrest Lama Su and see what you can get out of him," Mace said.

"Understood Master," he answered, as the transmission blinked out.

"Round up your padawans, Master Obi-Wan. Leaving for Korriban we are, at once," Yoda said. Obi-Wan bowed.

"Yes Master," he said, as he left to find Jeena and Jayden.

"You asked to see me, Sir," Taun We bowed to the Prime Minister.

"Sufficient time has passed. Master Sidious will want to see their bodies. Drain the cell and have them brought to the morgue. I will go down and send a transmission to the Master from there," Lama Su said, as he rose. Suddenly, the door slid open unexpectedly and Taun We found Padme's blaster in her face. Anakin closed the door and his light saber hummed dangerously in front of him.

"Have a seat, Prime Minister," Anakin ordered.

"Your little attempt to kill us failed. You and Taun We are under arrest," Anakin said, as he and Padme placed stun cuffs on both Kaminoans.

"In less than four hours, this place will be crawling with Republic Naval Officers and Jedi," Anakin said, as he placed a recorder on the desk.

"You have a choice. You can talk willingly or I can extract the information from you by mind probe. I warn you, the latter is excruciatingly painful," Anakin stated.

"What do you need to know?" Lama Su relented.

"Did you make a Clone of Palpatine?" Anakin asked.

"Several years ago, a young man calling himself Jaren came to us with a lucrative business deal. He gave me a sample and asked for a perfect Clone. He also gave me a data disc containing the design for a massive ship he wanted built. He called it a Super Star Destroyer. He paid us handsomely in the amount of ten million credits and left. The next time he came was eight years later. He picked up the completed Clone product and the massive ship. But before leaving, he handed me a data disc with several vehicle and weaponry designs. He paid me a considerable amount to being production, promising to triple the amount upon completion of the project," Lama Su stated.

"So, you helped resurrect a monster for money. Why am I not surprised! Greed seems to be our worst enemy," Anakin spat in disgust.

"Excuse me, Master Skywalker, but I have a colony of mouths to feed. When the Republic banned Cloning, our income suffered a substantial blow. We were barely making enough to feed our people with the income we made by manufacturing ships and weaponry for the Republic, especially since there are so many other facilities producing the same products!" Lama Su yelled.

"In other words, you miss creating life and playing God," Padme retorted. The Prime Minister gave her a withering look, but remained silent.

"The Republic helps those planets in need with financial grants. But I'm sure that would have been much less satisfying than the amount Jaren was paying you," Padme said.

"You don't care that the Sith will kill millions with the weapons you've built, as long as it does not affect you and your people. You are going to prison for a very long time, Prime Minister," Anakin stated, as he turned to Taun We to begin her questioning.

---

Jaren bowed before his father.

"Lama Su has failed to eliminate Skywalker and his wife. The Republic Navy and the Jedi have taken over the facility on Kamino," Jaren reported.

"Meddlesome fools," Palpatine snarled.

"No matter, we still have enough weapons and ships hidden in our other production facilities. But Skywalker and Amidala must pay for their meddling. Perhaps losing a son was not enough," Palpatine sneered, as he raised his comlink to his lips.

"You may proceed with the plan we discussed," he said.

"Yes My Master," a raspy, female voice answered.

---

Anna sat at her vanity, brushing out her long blonde hair. It had been a long day of debating in parliament and she was looking forward to a good night's sleep. Chewy, now arguably her best friend, was keeping watch. She set her brush down and climbed into bed. She glanced at the picture of her family on her bedside table. She picked it up and kissed it gently, her eyes lingering on her missing brother.

"Oh Luke, I hope you're okay. Daddy's going to find you," she said, as she placed the picture back its place. Using the Force, she turned out the lights and settled down into bed. Outside her bedroom window, a light breeze wafted through the garden flowers that Anna loved so much. But suddenly, the flowers wilted at an alarming rate, as their roots were frozen. The ground had turned to ice and a figure

stood at the window. Her very breath iced the window over, as she peered inside. The woman's eyes bled yellow and she cackled.

"All too easy. Mommy and daddy must pay for their transgressions against My Master. And we've decided that their baby girl will be the price they will pay..."

# Divide and Conquer

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars.

AN: Here's chapter 16! Enjoy and let me know what you think!

Never Gone III

Chapter 16: Divide and Conquer

Shaak Ti stood at the railing, looking over to the production area that had been suddenly and abruptly ceased.

"The destructive powers of some of these weapons would have been catastrophic," she said.

"I'm sure this is not Palpatine's only operation," Anakin replied.

"No doubt the Neimodians are at work again. We should have Master Windu launch an effort to track down more production facilities like this one," Kit said.

"Do you still believe Palpatine is using Isolder to eventually take control of the Hapan military?" Aayla asked.

"Why else would he need to keep the little slug alive? We all know Palpatine only keeps his pawns alive as long as they are useful," Anakin stated.

"Shaak, have there been any leads on Luke?" Padme asked hopefully. Shaak Ti looked sad.

"I'm sorry Padme, but we have found nothing yet," she answered regrettably. Padme lowered her head and Anakin pulled her into his arms, hugging her tightly.

"You both have done much here. Why don't you return to Coruscant and be with Leia," Kit suggested.

"I agree. Perhaps we should have Chewie and the Jedi guarding Anna bring her to the Temple. I know she has duties to Naboo, but her safety must come first," Aayla suggested.

"I agree. I'll make the call on the *Sapphire Angel* , once we take off," Padme said, as she turned to her husband, who was suddenly white as a sheet.

"No..." Anakin choked.

"Ani...what is it?" Padme asked.

"There's a disturbance in the Force..." Kit said sadly.

"No...Anna..." Anakin cried.

"Anna? Oh no...please no..." Padme cried.

"ANNA! NOOOO!" Anakin screamed in anguish, as he dropped to his knees...

---

Anna shivered a little and pulled the bedclothes up over her shoulder tighter. When she shivered again, she pushed the blankets back and got up to go check the thermo settings in her room. When her feet hit the floor, she recoiled in shock, as the floor was cold as ice. A sense of wrongness filled her and she grabbed her light saber from the bedside table. Using the Force, she carefully raised the lights. She was horrified to discover that her large, panoramic window was iced over...and the coldness was slowly spreading. She ignited her sapphire blade, ready to defend herself, as she slowly moved toward the door. Suddenly the glass window splintered and busted into pieces. A powerful gust of icy air sent glass whipping around the room. Anna screamed and covered her face, as she felt herself be cut in several places by the flying glass. She heard Chewie on the

other side of the door, banging on it. She pressed the open control, but nothing happened. The door was frozen shut.

"Chewie, the door is frozen shut! My window is broken!" she called. She heard him rawl in understanding and heard him stomp away. She guessed he was running outside the palace to her window. Anna held her saber in ready position and waited nervously for the appearance of what she knew had to be the ice demon. She gulped, as she spotted the dark figure in the broken window. She could tell it was a woman, due to the lithe frame of the person. She came into the light and a snarl marred her already hideous face. Her eyes bled crimson, yet were cold as ice. Her head was vacant of any hair and her skin was bluish-gray. Her breath could be seen and the room felt as though it was ten degrees and dropping, thanks to her presence.

"Skywalker..." she hissed the name with hatred. Anna raised her blade in defensive mode and the ice demon growled. Dozens of wraiths formed from her icy breath.

"Your meddlesome parents must pay for ruining my Master's plans. And you, little Queen, are the price they will pay..." the demon hissed. Her wraiths screeched and advanced on Anna. She twirled her blade expertly and began fighting off the horrible little gremlins. But the cold was wearing on her fast, as her lips started turning blue and her movements slowed. She felt one the creatures kick her in the back and she fell forward. The ice demon outstretched her hand and released an icy web, encasing Anna in the cold prison. It would keep her alive, but cold and immobile. She lifted the child Queen up and gazed into her eyes.

"Your father killed me...and I would take great pleasure in killing his lovely little baby girl. But unfortunately, my Master has ordered that I keep you alive," she sneered.

"Who...a...re you?" Anna shivered, choking on the words.

"Asaaj Ventress. The last name you'll ever hear," she snapped, as she hoisted the girl's web over her shoulder. Suddenly, she heard an

angry growl, as Chewie jumped in the room from the broken window. The wraiths advanced on him and the Wookie began fighting them off.

"Chewie..." she heard the girl whimper.

"So beast...you'd like to come along too. That can be arranged," Ventress snarled.

"No...don't h...hurt him," Anna sobbed.

"Shut up, you foolish brat," Ventress snarled, as she raised her hand and captured Chewie in one of her icy webs. He rawled in despair, trying desperately to free himself.

"Bring him," Ventress ordered. Her wraiths descended on the imprisoned Wookie and the cold slowly immobilized him, despite all his fur.

"Let her go Ventress!" a male voice cried. She smirked, as several Jedi entered through the broken window.

"Fools...tell Skywalker that his little baby will suffer for his meddling and her blood will be on his hands!" Ventress howled, as an icy zephyr whipped through the room, tossing the Jedi violently about, as she, her wraiths and her two prisoners, vanished...

---

The small Republic shuttle landed on the barren, distant world of Korriban, famously known as the birth place of the Sith race. The Sith had a savage and bloody past. In ancient times, many referred to the Sith Order as a dangerous cult, because of the way it twisted the minds and hearts of its recruits. Pure evil they were, even then. Murder, rage, revenge, betrayal, greed, hunger for power, and mercilessness were the foundations upon with the Sith Order was built and thus also what destroyed them in the end. Their race diminished to two, no more, no less. And the ancient, damaged Temple in the distance was all that remained of the Sith heritage. For

thousands of years, after the Great Sith Wars, those descendants of their race were forced into hiding by the Jedi. But the Force foresaw a terrible future, where the Jedi would become stagnant and close minded. The Sith would rise again in the light of their blind ignorance. And so, the Force created a son that could stand against the evils of the powerful Sith Order. He would wield the raw power of the Force and his eyes would shine in the darkness. But the Force's Chosen warrior could only succeed against the Sith if he used the one weapon they didn't have. And that weapon was love. Yoda sighed, as he remembered reading the details of the prophecy. His heart broke, as he heard the screams of young Anna Skywalker. Palpatine's minions had taken another stab at the Chosen One's heart. Anakin and Padme's wrenching pain stabbed at his own heart.

"Master...we have felt a disturbance in the Force," Obi-Wan said, as he stood before Yoda with his children.

"Your feelings do not betray you. Young Anna, a prisoner of the Sith, she now is," Yoda said sadly. Tears welled in Jeena's eyes and Jayden hugged her, trying to push back his own.

"Trying to use love against Anakin, the Sith are. Want to break his spirit, Sidious does, so defeat him, he can," Yoda said, sadly.

"Come. Investigate the ruins we must," Yoda said, as they headed for the Sith Temple in the near distance.

---

Luke's tortured screams echoed through the chamber. His bare back was a mess of welts from the brutal electrowhip. His knees burned from kneeling on them for so long and his arms burned even worse, for they were shackled above his head. His forearms were stained crimson, thanks to his mangled wrists encased in the shackles. In between lashes and screams, he painfully sucked air into his heaving lungs. Tears poured down his cheeks, as he was tortured mercilessly. His captor delighted in his pain and did not show any signs of letting up.

"You can blame your father for your pain, brat," Jango sneered, as he slashed him again. Luke screamed in agony, his whole body felt like it was on fire.

"He's the reason for your pain," Jango said, as he grabbed a fistful of the young man's hair and pulled his head back.

"My fath...er is a gre...at man!" Luke choked out. This earned him a punch in the mouth. Blood sprayed from his nose and mouth. Luke screamed, as Jango kneed him in the stomach. Luke coughed violently and crimson liquid spattered on the dank, dingy floor.

"Your father is a fool...you foolish whelp . And so is your whore of a mother," Jango sneered. Fire flashed in Luke's eyes at the utterance of such an insult toward his mother.

"My...mother..." he rasped. Jango cut him off, laughing at him.

"Mommy can't help you here little prince," Jango snarled. Luke screamed in agony, as the lightning demon pumped his electricity into Luke's beaten body. He ceased and walked to the cell doors. He opened them and two med droids rolled in.

"Fix his wounds and make sure he doesn't die," Jango ordered. That was Fett's cruel game he tortured Luke for hours on end and then had the med droids heal him. All so he could rip into him later again. Luke slumped to the cold, dirty floor, as the shackles released him and the med droids descended on him...

---

Jaren bowed before his father.

"Ventress has captured the youngest brat," Jaren reported.

"Good. Did you instruct her to make sure she stays alive?" Palpatine asked.

"Yes. I told her she may torture the brat if she sees fit, but that she must use the med droids to care for her afterward," Jaren said.

"Good. I want the pleasure of slaughtering the entire Skywalker family myself," Palpatine laughed evilly. The last thing the Chosen One will see is his family being tortured and murdered before his eyes...before the same fate befalls him as well..." Palpatine sneered evilly.

Leia curled up on the sofa in her parent's quarters in the Temple her face was stained with tears, as she thought about her brother, her sister, and the man she loved. All had been taken from her. Would she be next? Or would it be her mother? Could her father survive it if they were all taken from him?

*"Of course he could. Daddy's strong and he'd rescue us all,"* she told herself. The guard had tripled on her, since Anna's abduction and she knew her father would not be letting her or her mother out of his sight. She started crying again, as she thought about how scared Luke and Anna must be.

"I wish...you were all here. I wish...you were here too, Han. I need you," she sobbed, as she curled into a fetal position.

---

Anakin and Padme hurried down the ramp of their ship and met Mace Windu, who was waiting for them.

"I'm so sorry to you both. The Jedi guarding her tried to get to her, but the ice demon's power threw them around with a vengeance. She also took Chewie, as I'm sure the Wookie was trying to protect her," Mace said.

"Her? Did they see who the demon was?" Anakin asked. Mace nodded and looked at them regretfully.

"Asaaj Ventress is the ice demon," he said. Anakin's blood ran cold at the thought of his little girl being in the clutches of that cruel,

vindictive woman. He had killed Ventress twenty years ago on Mustafar, after she had kidnapped Padme and just before his battle with Palpatine. Ventress would no doubt harm his little girl...and there was nothing he could do about it.

"Anakin, I have spoken with Master Yoda. They have investigated the Sith Temple and are on their way back," Mace said.

"What did they find?" he asked.

"I think we have much to discuss. It will be a long night. I suggest you and Padme go check on Leia and then meet us for a conference with Master Yoda and Obi-Wan in thirty minutes," Mace said. Anakin and Padme nodded, before going inside the Temple and headed for their spacious quarters.

---

Jeena groaned, as she walked right into a cobweb at the entrance of the Sith Temple.

"Lovely place. We should come back for holiday," she grumbled, as she brushed herself off. They entered the crumbling corridor and a lantern that her father carried lit their way. The walls were adorned with ancient hieroglyphics that neither Jeena nor Jayden could make any sense of, except for the obvious violence the pictures beheld. Figures of what they assumed were Sith, fighting, torturing and murdering beings. She noticed that most of the beings that were suffering in the pictures were not human.

"Daddy, can you read any of this language?" Jeena asked.

"No, it is an ancient Sith language that was lost long ago. Master Yoda, I believe can read some, but it takes immense concentration to do so," he pointed, indicating the fancy symbols that the people had used for words.

"But...it is a good bet that Palpatine knows the language fluidly and possibly Jaren as well. But the pictures speak for themselves, I

think," Obi-Wan said.

"Dad, how come most of the people being killed in these carvings are not human?" Jayden asked.

"I think Master Yoda can answer that better than I," Obi-Wan answered.

"Hmm...inquisitive you are young ones and observant to notice such things. Refer to the times of the Great Sith Wars, most of these carvings do," Yoda said.

"Master Yoda is right. The Sith Order believed and still believe that humans are the what they call the pure race. And that all other races should be enslaved or expunged," Obi-Wan explained.

"That's awful. Just because they're different?" Jayden asked.

"Yes, the Sith believe that no other race is as intelligent as humans or as clean," Obi-Wan answered.

"How barbaric. Master Ti, Master Secura, and Master Fisto are some of the most respected non humans in the galaxy. How can the Sith claim that they are not pure or unintelligent," Jeena said in disgust.

"There are a great many things that the Sith are wrong about, Jeena," Obi-Wan told her.

"Correct, Obi-Wan is. The ways of the Sith, warped they are. Deal in absolutes, the Sith do," Yoda said.

"But there have been non-human Sith Lords before. How come they let non-humans be in their Order?" Jayden asked.

"Good question, young one. To put it simply, the Sith got desperate after the devastation of the Great Sith Wars. They used to be an all human race, but once their numbers dwindled, they accepted non-humans that chose their ways. They, however, were always pawns.

The true Master and Apprentice have always been human, with a few exceptions of course, most notably, Darth Maul," Obi-Wan said.

"Correct, Obi-Wan is. When an alien apprentice a human Master has, seek a human replacement, he will. Use the alien apprentice as a pawn and to do his bidding, nothing more," Yoda said.

"Master Yoda is right. It is unfortunate to say that most Sith apprentices are merely victims themselves," Obi-Wan said, as they reached what looked to be a throne room.

"Wow, this place definitely gets a ten on the creepiest places in the galaxy scale," Jeena mentioned. Obi-Wan looked around the walls, which told of great, but horribly bloody battles and approached a peculiar stalagmite in the center of the room. He discovered that it was hollow and found a pool of black, silvery liquid inside.

"Master, perhaps you should look at this," Obi-Wan said. The little green Master hobbled over and hopped up on Obi-Wan's shoulder. The little Master dipped his hand into the black liquid and quickly shrugged it off in disgust.

"Do you know what this is, Master?" Obi-Wan asked.

"Sith Holy Water, this is. Filled with dark properties, this liquid is. According to Sith legend, the power to take essence, this dark water does," Yoda said.

"Take essence?" Jayden asked in confusion.

"Master, do you mean this is the Holy Water that Jaren possibly used to merge with Palpatine's soul in order for it to inhabit the Clone Palpatine's body?" Obi-Wan asked.

"Correct, you are Obi-Wan. Performed the ancient ritual, Jaren did. Tells of how to do this, these hieroglyphs do. Understand them, Jaren must and studied the Sith holocrons, he has," Yoda concluded. Jeena wandered around, glancing at the glyphs on the walls of wars

past and came to a control console. She touched her fingers to an inscription that was carved into the durasteel among the controls. She found it very strange and did not recognize the language, for the tiny symbols were that of the ancient Sith language.

"Daddy, there are words carved into this console. More hieroglyphs," Jeena asked. Obi-Wan walked to the console and studied the tiny words there.

"It looks as though it could be a pass code of some kind. Do you recognize it, Master?" Obi-Wan asked. Yoda hopped up on the console and studied the inscription for a moment.

"Hmm..." Yoda said, as concentrated on translating the ancient symbols to basic.

"Difficult to remember, the ancient Sith language is. Only have studied one Sith holocron, I have and that is the one in the Archives," Yoda said, as he silently studied them more.

"With these, the Sith legacy will never die out..." Yoda translated.

"That's what it says?" Jayden asked. Yoda nodded.

"Daddy, look!" Jeena pointed to the center of the room, where a portal had opened in the floor. A large cylindrical console rose from the floor and gleamed brightly with an assortment of strange, pyramid-shaped objects.

"Sith Holocrons..." Obi-Wan said in amazement.

"A worthy discovery, we have made. A serious blow to Palpatine it is. Contain vital information to the Sith Order they do. A vast collection, Palpatine has acquired over the years. Knew he had them, I did. Never suspected them to be here, I did," Yoda said. Jayden and Jeena looked at them in wonder, but fell quite sick all of the sudden.

"Dad, I don't feel so good," Jayden said.

"Me either," Jeena added.

"That is the effect of the Sith holocrons. They have very dark properties and can often make those of the light side Force feel ill in their presence," Obi-Wan explained.

"Give me your satchel, Jeena," Obi-Wan said. Jeena handed the bag of supplies to her father and Obi-Wan started putting the objects inside the bag to take with them. The console began blinking red and a set of numbers appeared on the screen.

"Sith...I think you activated some kind of self destruct system!" Jeena exclaimed.

"Operate on a pass code system it must as well," Yoda said.

"And we don't know how the pass code," Obi-Wan said, as he hurriedly stuffed, as many holocrons as he could get into the satchel.

"With these, the Sith legacy will never die out!" Jeena recited the words, but nothing happened.

"No use. Let's go, before this place starts coming down around us!" Obi-Wan called, as he pushed his children forward, back into the narrow corridors. Master Yoda hopped up on Obi-Wan's shoulder, as he ran after them. They reached the outside and were thrust to the ground when the entire Temple exploded. Debris scattered around them and they looked back, only to find nothing but stone rubble as what remained of the ancient Temple. They stood up and brushed themselves off.

"Whoa, Palpatine is going to be pissed!" Jayden quipped, while Jeena gave him a look.

"What?" he asked. Obi-Wan smirked.

"Careful with the language, son. If your mother heard you talk like that, she'd wash your mouth out with soap," Obi-Wan chuckled.

Jayden rolled his eyes.

"Come, let us leave this dark place. Remain here no longer, we should," Yoda said. The Kenobi's agreed and returned to their shuttle. Once they took off, they would make contact with the Temple and discuss their discovery...

# Siege on Coruscant

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars.

AN: Here's chapter 17! Thanks for all the great reviews. Enjoy the update!

Never Gone III

Chapter 17: Siege on Coruscant

Anakin and Padme entered their quarters and found Leia curled up on the sofa, sobs racking her petite shoulders.

"Leia...oh sweetheart, we're here," Padme knelt beside her.

"Oh mom...I'm so scared," Leia cried.

"I know sweetie, I know," Padme soothed her, as she rocked her in her arms.

"What if...what if the wind demon comes for you, mom?" Leia sobbed. Anakin knelt down and put his arms around both of them.

"There's no way in seven Sith hells I'm letting either of you out of my sight. But that means you both need to promise you won't wander off. I will find Luke and Anna, but I can't lose either of you in the process," Anakin said.

They both nodded. Anakin kissed Leia's forehead.

"Uncle Obi-Wan and your cousins found something on Korriban. Hopefully, it will help us," Anakin said. Leia nodded and went to the fresher to dry her face quickly. As Padme sat on the sofa, Anakin knelt beside her, gazing up into her teary eyes.

"I promise you Padme, I will bring them home, no matter what," he said, as a tear slipped down his cheek.

"I know you will," she answered, as several tears rolled down her own cheeks. He stood up and pulled her into a crushing hug, so very afraid that she would disappear if he let go. Padme hugged him back just as tightly and the tears flooded from her eyes, as she gave into her grief. Anakin held her, as she cried almost uncontrollably against his chest. He held her tightly and kissed her hair, comforting her as best he could...

---

Jaren entered his father's throne room and knelt before him.

"Rise my son," Palpatine ordered.

"Father...I sent the fire demon to investigate the disturbance on Korriban. He has returned with troubling news," Jaren said.

"Come forth and explain, he shall then," Palpatine ordered. The dark throne room lit up with bright red and orange hues, as the fire demon appeared.

"Master Sidious...we meet again," Dooku greeted in his deep, cultured voice. He looked mostly the same as he had in life, though his eyes burned red and his skin appeared leathery, thanks to the extreme heat of his element.

"What has happened on Korriban?" Palpatine asked.

"The Temple has self destructed. The Sith holocrons are gone. My old Master, Kenobi and his little whelps have stolen them," Dooku reported. Palpatine's eyes glowed yellow with rage.

"You fools!" Palpatine screamed, as red Force lightning erupted from his fingertips. Jaren and Dooku writhed in agony.

"There can be no more mistakes! The time has come to enter the final phase of our plan. Summon your worthless brother," he snapped at Jaren. A few moments later, Ta'a and Isolder entered the Throne room and bowed.

"The time has come. Ready your forces and invade Alderaan, Naboo, Chandrilla, Malastare, and Coruscant. Once all the core planets of the Republic fall, the rest will crumble as well. The fire and wind demons will take care of the siege on the Jedi Temple. Order them to kill as many as they can," Palpatine said.

"Yes, My Master," Jaren bowed.

"You...want me to have my Troops invade all those planets?" Isolder asked in disbelief.

"Tell them what you must and do it, or I will obliterate Hapes with this ship's super laser, you scum sucking worm!" Jaren spat. Palpatine cackled evilly, as his servants set out to do his bidding. Jaren changed the ship's course and set it for Coruscant.

"Soon...everything you love will be destroyed...Chosen One," Palpatine sneered.

---

Due to the interference of hyperspace, Obi-Wan had been forced to cut their transmission with the Temple. He landed the ship at the Temple now, just a few hours later. It was dawn, yet those waiting for them to arrive had never gone to bed. Lea stood on the landing pad, as her children sprinted down the ramp and into her arms. Yoda hobbled down the ramp and then finally Obi-Wan. He swept Lea into his arms and kissed her tenderly.

"Oh Ben..." she said, the despair evident in her voice.

"It will be all right, my love. We'll set everything right," he promised. She nodded, as they went inside the Temple and started for the situation room where everyone was waiting.

"Made an important discovery on Korriban, we did," Yoda began, as he looked around to those in the room.

"We discovered a large collection of Sith holocrons. Unfortunately, we were unable to disarm the self destruct mechanism that was placed on the holocron's hiding place and the Sith Temple was lost. We did, however, manage to get out with many of the holocrons," Obi-Wan said, as he emptied Jeena's satchel, revealing several pyramid shaped objects that were engraved with Sith symbols and hieroglyphics.

"Daddy and I think this one might help us find Luke and Anna. Master Yoda read what he could and it speaks about Sith demons," Jeena said.

"Master Yoda, what did it say?" Anakin asked eagerly.

"Sith demons like to dwell in the places of their elements, they do. On planets that compliment those elements, Luke and Anna may be," Yoda said.

"If that is true, then Luke is on a planet where lightning is prominent. And Anna is on one where ice is," Padme said.

"Dantooine," Lea said.

"What?" Obi-Wan asked.

"I was stranded on Datooine for a long time. During this time of year, it is monsoon season there. The lightning storms are nothing short of spectacular. Luke is on Dantooine," Lea said.

"The arena," Anakin said, as the attention turned to him.

"The Geonosian style arena that Dooku built there was a part of a droid factory there. That's where Luke is. The droid factory is probably in operation again. It provides a perfect place to hide Luke

and the open arena provides a perfect place for Fett to draw power," Anakin said.

"Then what about Anna?" Padme asked. Everyone was silent.

"Perhaps Ilum?" Mace suggested.

"That is doubtful. We visit there far too much for light saber crystals," Obi-Wan said.

"If you are searching for an ice planet, then may I suggest Hoth," came a voice of Bail Organa who sat next to Mace and his daughter Kira.

"Hoth? But that is so remote," Shaak Ti mentioned.

"Thus perfect," Obi-Wan added.

"Obi-Wan's right. Palpatine could have a base there and no one would know. Hoth is so remote and barren. No one patrols that far out," Anakin said, as he rose.

"Padme, Leia, and I are going," Anakin announced. Suddenly, they heard what sounded like large explosions outside.

"Invading this world, a dark presence is," Yoda said sadly. Anakin jumped up and gazed out the Council room windows. The sight that met them was already catastrophic. Large walking vehicles roamed the landscape, crushing everything beneath them and blowing buildings apart with their lasers. Hapan warships loomed in the air. The massive dome of the Senate building was charred with blaster holes.

"Evacuate the Temple! Get all the younglings to the docking bay!" Anakin screamed.

"Anakin is right! We must board all the emergency transports and evacuate Jedi, Senate personnel, and civilians to the back up base on Yavin IV! Everyone to the docking bay!" Mace screamed.

Suddenly, a blast hit the Temple and it shuddered violently, as permacrete fell in chunks around them. Anakin shielded Padme and Leia from the debris.

"I'll go to the Senate and help the Jedi there evacuate. Some of you get transports and head for the residential district!" Mace called. Several Masters and Knights followed him to acquire the transports. Yoda led Bail, Kira, and many others to the nearest lift, even as another blast hit the Temple and tossed its occupants about.

"We are not the only ones under attack! Naboo, Alderaan, Malastare and Chandrilla are as well!" Shaak Ti cried to those who still remained, having gotten the holonews bulletin on her datapad.

"Naboo..." Padme said, dread filling her.

"We'll head for Naboo. We will divide our forces equally among the five planets," Obi-Wan ordered.

"Anakin, you and your family will head for Dantooine and Hoth. May the Force be with us all," Obi-Wan said, as he whisked his family off to the transports that would be heading for Naboo. Anakin raised his comlink to his lips.

"Artoo...get the *Sapphire Angel* ready to take off!" Anakin called. As he started toward the lift with his wife and daughter by his side. Permacrete and durcrete rained down upon them, as the Temple's ceiling was ripped open by a massive cyclone.

"Palo..." Anakin growled, as he braced himself against the heavy winds. Padme and Leia clung to him, as they suddenly felt intense heat under their feet. They were blown back toward the now shattered windows in the Council room.

"Artoo, fly the ship up the windows of the Council room," Anakin screamed into his comlink, as a torrent of fire exploded through the floor and ceiling. Padme and Leia screamed, and buried their faces away from the flying cinders. He felt Padme grip him tighter.

"Ani...something is pulling me!" she screamed, the terror evident in her voice, for she knew it was Palo.

"No...you won't take them from me!" Anakin yelled fiercely, as his eyes blazed brightly and a shimmering white shield surrounded all three of them. The ship arrived and the ramp was lowered. Threepio stood by, as Anakin lifted Leia onto the ramp, which was above them. Threepio pulled her up, followed my Padme and finally Anakin.

"Get strapped in," Anakin said, as he sprinted to the cockpit. He strapped in and took control of the guns, plowing his way through oncoming fighters and buzz droids.

"Set the course for Dantooine, Artoo," he ordered. Anakin turned the ship and saw that Temple was now completely engulfed in flames. The Senate building was crumbling under heavy fire and buildings were collapsing to ruins. He pulled back hard on the controls and zoomed out of the atmosphere. He quickly made the calculations and jumped to hyperspace.

---

Jaren knelt before his father, as their Super Star Destroyer loomed over Coruscant.

"Coruscant has fallen. The Jedi Temple is nothing but ashes and the Senate district is severally damaged. Our reports tells us that Jedi transports that made it out are heading to help fight invasions on the other four worlds. Masters Yoda and Windu are taking all Senate personnel and Jedi younglings, as well as civilian refugees to a safe location in which we are unaware of at this time. Skywalker has escaped as well with his wife and daughter," Jaren reported. Palpatine cackled.

"Good...the Republic home world is mine now. My Empire is slowly rising. Take us into the atmosphere and dock us over the wrecked Senate building for now," Palpatine ordered. Ta'a entered the throne room.

"My Lord, Alderaan, Chandrilla, and Malastare have surrendered to you. Naboo still resists, but it shall not be long," Ta'a reported.

"Thank you, Ta'a," Palpatine said.

"Tell Isolder to send a team to search for the place where Yoda has take his refugees," Palpatine ordered.

"Yes father, but what about Skywalker?" Jaren asked. Palpatine smirked.

"Send the fire demon to Dantooine. You go to Hoth and take the wind demon with you. Make sure they do not leave Hoth alive if they manage to escape Dantooine," Palpatine said. Jaren bowed and left to board his own ship.

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Anna dangled by a pair of shackles made out of ice. She was unconscious, as Ventress had beaten the child Queen until she could take no more. Asaaj had stripped the girl, so she could lash her bare back with her icy whip. The weapon ripped at her skin with a cruel, frigid sting. Anna's screams had been agonizing and her sobbing uncontrollable. And Ventress had enjoyed every second of the girl's pain. The demon released her icy bonds and Anna fell into a broken heap. She kicked the girl away and the med droids rolled to her.

"Treat her so she lives for the time being. Then dress her and put her back in her cell with the beast," Ventress ordered coldly.

Sometime later, a barely conscious Anna was tossed into her cell. Chewie rawled in despair and scooped the girl up. They had treated her just enough to keep her alive and dressed her back in her dirty, torn nightgown she'd been brought in. Chewie cuddled her violently shivering form close to his fur.

"Chewie...i...i'm s...so cold," she cried. Chewie snuggled her against his fur and cried in despair.

"It h...hurt so...bad..." Anna sobbed. Chewie cried with her, as they huddled together in the dark, cold prison...

---

Obi-Wan flew their ship over their beloved planet, which was a warn torn battle ground now. The Nabooan army and the Gungans alike were fighting gallantly. But Theed had already sustained heavy damage, as Palpatine's Imperial walkers devastated the land. The palace was on fire and half blown apart. Theed square was full of Hapan soldiers and battles waged in the air as well. It was a savage sight, especially on a beautiful planet like Naboo. He glanced behind his shoulder and saw his wife standing there in a battle uniform with her blaster cocked.

"What do you think you are doing?" Obi-Wan asked.

"What do you think I'm doing? I'm preparing to defend my planet against these bastards," she replied fiercely.

"No, you are getting dropped off at the lake country with Padme's parents and the others," Obi-Wan replied.

"Like hell I am. Not this time, Ben," Lea stated.

"I'm not having you put yourself in that kind of danger," Obi-Wan replied.

"I can take care of myself! I'm fighting by your side this time! Naboo needs all the help it can get," Lea said. Obi-Wan landed the ship on the outskirts of the countryside. He stood up face to face with his beautiful wife, who wore of a look of determination.

"No, I'll not have you going out into this and possibly getting hurt...or worse. I have enough reservations about taking Jay and Jeena with me, but they are Jedi," Obi-Wan said.

"Oh, now suddenly I can't fight, because I'm not a Jedi!" she yelled.

"Bloody hell, this is a war!" he yelled back.

"I know and it's my war too!" she shouted.

"Blasted, stubborn, frustrating woman!" he griped.

"Macho, pig-headed Shaak rear!" she retorted. They glared at each other, neither willing to back down or crumble under the other's stare.

"I know full well you can take care of yourself, but a battlefield is no place for you," his voice was now soft and tender.

"It is when it is fought upon the soil of my birthplace," her voice was soft and gentle now as well.

"I love you so deeply...to depths upon which I cannot even comprehend. Blast it, Lea, I can't lose you," he said, as he gripped her shoulders gently.

"And I deeply love you as well. I can't watch you and our children run off into another battle without me...not this time. We are in this one together," she said, as she gazed up into his hazel eyes. Obi-Wan gave in to her pleading amber brown eyes and swept her into a searing kiss. Lea's arms flew around his neck, as he kissed her wantonly.

"Stay close to me. You must promise me that," he said. She smiled.

"I'll be right by your side...always," she answered. They headed back into the cabin and stepped down the ramp with their children behind them. They watched the Gungan Army's devastating battle with sorrow.

"Dad, what are we going to do? Those Walkers are so huge!" Jayden said.

"Now son, you know that size matters not when you have the Force as your ally. I have a plan, of course. Let's go give them a Kenobi

family greeting," Obi-Wan said.

"You mean right before we kick their asses?" Jeena asked with a smirk.

"Jeena!" Lea exclaimed and Obi-Wan chuckled.

"Exactly," he replied.

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The *Sapphire Angel* soared into Dantooine's stormy atmosphere. From outside the planet, Anakin had seen a massive storm system that was battering the planet. When Lea said it was monsoon season, she hadn't been kidding. He spotted the old, rundown arena in the distance. Positioned in the center of the jungle, it was evident it had been abandoned for many years, as the jungle was growing up and around it. Anakin found a spacious clearing nearby and gently set the ship down.

"Artoo, you and Threepio stay here and prepare for a quick get away. I'll call if I need the ship brought closer," Anakin said, as he walked back into the cabin with long strides. Padme and Leia stood ready in identical white battle uniforms. Padme had two blasters holstered at her sides, in addition to her ascension gun and several thermal detonators. He smirked. He knew she fully intended to blow the facility to bits once they rescued Luke. And he agreed that the place needed to be destroyed too. Leia also had a blaster and ascension gun holstered on one hip, while her's and Luke's light sabers hung from the other. The three of them pulled their cloaks on and raised their hoods.

"Stay close," Anakin told them, as they sprinted down the ramp and into the rain. Padme and Leia flanked Anakin, as they trekked through the jungle. After a lengthy walk, they finally reached the vine and brush covered walls of the Geonosian style arena built by Dooku years ago. Padme and Leia took out their ascension guns and attached two cables to the top and held onto the gun tightly, as they were lifted to the top. Anakin smirked and gathered the Force under

him, before using it to leap to the top himself in one jump. They pulled themselves over the ledge and let the ascension guns lower them. Anakin leapt down and softened his landing with the Force. Inside the fortress, Dooku watched them enter the arena on the security screen. He smirked and flipped a few levers.

"Let's sent out a welcoming committee to greet our guests," Dooku said, as he left the room in a blaze of fire. He reappeared several levels below in a large, circular room, where young Luke Skywalker was again at the mercy of Jango Fett. Luke screamed in agony, as Jango beat him with brutal lashes to his back with his electrowhip.

"He's here," Dooku said, watching the boy's head lift toward him.

"What are the orders from Master Sidious?" Fett asked.

"If my father is here, then you're both finished!" Luke spat. Jango kicked the boy in the chest, injuring his already bruised ribs.

"Shut up, you foolish whelp. I'm sick of this brat! I say we kill him now and let the Chosen One know what happens when he tries to cross us!" Jango said.

"No...the boy is still useful. Skywalker will not make a move against us as long as we dangle the boy's life before him," Dooku said. Jango smirked and grabbed Luke by the hair.

"Make peace with your All Mighty Force, you stupid brat, because I'm going to enjoy your bloody scream, as I kill you right in front bastard father," Jango sneered, as he shoved Luke to the ground face down and drew his whip again...

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Several gates opened in the arena and droids marched out.

"Well, I guess we know that this facility is operational again," Padme said, as she drew her blaster. Anakin and Leia ignited their blades.

"There's going to be too many for three of us to take out. Let's make our path to that gate and get inside as quickly as we can. They're desperate and Luke will suffer for that," Anakin said. Padme and Leia nodded, as the battle to get Luke back began...

# The Fall of the Republic

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars.

AN: Here's chapter 18! Enjoy and let me know what you think!

Never Gone III

Chapter 18: The Fall of the Republic

Anakin twirled his saber expertly, slicing through droids left and right. He groaned, as three droidekas rolled toward them and put up their shields. He and Leia blocked their blasts with their sabers and Padme continued firing on the other droids. The three of them were surrounded and pushed into the center of the arena.

"They keep coming dad!" Leia cried. Anakin pulled Leia and Padme close. His eyes glowed brightly and he made a sideways swipe with his saber. A flail of white energy swept through all the droids in its path, ripping them to shreds, including the droidekas. He made three more swipes with his blade, taking out the rest. Padme handed him a thermal detonator and he hurled it at one of the closed entrances. They covered their faces, as it exploded, destroying the door.

"Stay close. Let's go," Anakin said, as they sprinted inside the fortress.

"Ani...can you sense Luke?" Padme asked. He nodded curtly.

"Several levels down," Anakin replied.

"There's a lift over there!" Leia pointed.

"That's exactly what they'll be expecting. Come on, we'll find a different way down," Anakin said, as he motioned them to follow down a narrow corridor.

The Gungans fired their blue energy spheres at the four Imperial Walkers that were destroying Theed in the distance and the surrounding countryside, but so far, their weapons had missed and failed to do any damage. Obi-Wan surveyed the battle, as he approached with his family flanking him. He noticed the carriage that was holding all the extra energy spheres.

"Any ideas?" Lea asked. He smirked.

"Just one right now. You two, distract one of the Walkers and lure him into an open space," Obi-Wan said, as he took Lea's hand and started running toward the Gungan carriage.

"Obi?" a Gungan asked, as he saw the two humans approach.

"Obi!" Jar Jar exclaimed, as he squeezed the Jedi in a bone crushing hug.

"Mesa so happy to see yousa! Things is bombad...bombad. Wesa outnumbered...bombad," Jar Jar rambled.

"You must calm down, Jar Jar. Get a few of your friends to help us pull this cart. I have a plan," Obi-Wan said. Jar Jar motioned to three of his fellow Gungans and they began pulling the cart. They stopped when they saw Jayden and Jeena sprinting toward them with a Walker stalking behind them.

"I think we pissed it off!" Jayden yelled.

"You were the one that was doing the name calling, dummy!" Jeena shouted.

"Turn the cart around!" Obi-Wan called. They turned it, so it was facing the other way.

"Now Lea!" he called to his wife, who was up on the edge of the cart. She pulled a rope, which undid the hatch, allowing the blue spheres to spill out onto the ground. The Walker began stumbling over the

obstacles, but found the bombardment to be too much. The machine toppled onto its side and exploded. Obi-Wan lifted Lea down and she kissed his cheek.

"Come on, we've got three others to destroy!" Obi-Wan called. Jayden suddenly got a wild look in his eye.

"I've got an idea!" he said, as he spotted two blue spheres laying next to each other.

"Jar Jar, find me some rope, lots of it!" Jayden called. Jar Jar scrambled off to find all the rope he could. Jayden put everyone to work, tying the rope around the spheres tightly, so they would not slip. An angry Walker stalked toward them, as they laid their trap.

"Now!" Jayden called. Each team on either side pulled the rope tight. The Walker stumbled, but tried to keep walking, thus pulling Naboo's defenders along with it

"Jayden, this isn't working!" Jeena cried.

"It will. Just a little more!" he called. Once the walker had pulled the two grounds together behind it, Jayden gave the signal.

"Okay, let go!" he called. They did and the two spheres at the end of each rope went flying and crossed. The momentum caused the rope to wind around, as the heavy spheres spun around each other. The spheres met and exploded, just as the Walker was finally tripped. It too fell forward and exploded.

"Yeeeahh!" Jayden cheered.

"That's my boy," Obi-Wan said proudly, as he patted his son on the back.

"Not bad Jay. That idea was so dumb, it actually worked," Jeena said.

"Hey!" Jayden protested.

"We're proud of you baby," Lea said, ass she kissed his cheek. He grimaced in embarrassment.

"Mom..." he complained.

"Two down, but we still have two to go," Jeena mentioned.

"I've got another idea!" Jayden cried, as he ran off.

"Wait Jay!" Jeena called.

"What are they up to now?" Lea wondered, as she watched her children run across the field with several Gungans.

"I don't know," Obi-Wan said. Lea screamed, as he suddenly pulled her to the ground, as Palpatine's strange looking fighters, piloted by Hapan soldiers, flew over their heads, shooting laser blasts. It seemed that they had been discovered. Blasts rained down on the field like wildfire.

"Jayden! Jeena!" Lea screamed in horror, as explosions raged across the field. A blast hit near them and threw them several feet. Obi-Wan helped Lea up and they began running through the field, dodging blasts. Dead Gungans were littered on the grass and Lea felt like retching, for she had never seen the carnage of war before. Obi-Wan had sheltered her and she had not been prepared for this. She'd seen frightening Holonet images, but it was nothing remotely close to the horrifying reality of seeing it this close. Obi-Wan pulled Lea close and ducked behind the empty, overturned cart.

"Obi-Wan, the kids!" she said.

"They'll be okay, love. We'll find them," he promised. She shrieked and clung tightly to him, as another blast hit near them. They heard Jeena scream in pain and Obi-Wan shot up. He saw his children trying to make their way back toward them. He ran out and grabbed them both, dragging them toward the overturned cart. Jeena's arm had been hit badly with a laser bolt.

"There's too many," Jayden cried. Obi-Wan ripped a strip of cloth from his cloak and wrapped it around her wound, as Jeena sobbed quietly.

"Jar Jar saved us...he's dead. He took...a blast meant for us. Why did they have...to kill him? They're almost all dead. It's not fair! What right do...they have to play God!" Jeena screamed. Lea hugged her and rocked her slowly.

"Ben...what more can we do? We've lost. Naboo is lost," Lea said, tears rolling down her cheeks.

"We stay and die or we flee and get the chance to return later," Obi-Wan said.

"What about grandma and grandpa Naberrie?" Jayden asked.

"I contacted them from the ship earlier and told them to leave the planet and head for Yavin IV. We can only hope they did," Obi-Wan, as he led his family back to their ship. Obi-Wan took off and managed to clear a path into space. He set the course for Yavin IV and jumped to hyperspace.

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A massive door slid open before them and they stepped inside. Below the ledge they stood on, a massive factory worked to produce droids by the thousands.

"We're getting close," Anakin said, as he led them down the stairs and into the factory. Anakin found a large control panel near the wall. He opened the hatch and ignited his saber, before slicing through the mess of wires. The machines instantly shut down. A surge of electricity sparked through the panel, causing Anakin to recoil. The electricity surged through the room and everything started up again.

"Fett," Anakin growled, as he looked around the room.

"It's over Jango. Where's my son!" Anakin demanded. Anakin heard an evil laugh.

"It's far from over, Jedi scum. Your miserable is existence is the only thing that is at an end!" the voice rasped. Electricity surged through the room and Jango appeared with Luke's abused form at his feet. Anakin's eyes flashed dangerously, as he saw the mess of burn marks and welts on his son's back. Anakin ignited his blade and stepped forward.

"Your powers are useless against me if you cannot catch me," Jango sneered, as he began surging around the room at lightning speed. Anakin drew his power from the Force. An aura of white flames burned brightly around him and his eyes shined. He leapt into the air, matching Jango's speed and giving chase. Padme and Leia rushed to Luke and Leia sliced through the shackles on his bloody wrists. Padme caressed his face and a few of her tears fell on his face. He weakly opened his bleary eyes.

"Mom..." he choked in pain.

"I'm here baby...I'm here," she assured him.

"Dad..." he called.

"He's here too. He's fighting Fett," Leia said. Luke grimaced and started breathing hard.

"Luke, it's okay. It'll be okay," Padme assured him.

"No...Dooku..." he cried.

"Dooku?" Leia asked.

"I think he means me," a deep voice said, as he appeared in a torrent of flames.

"No..." Padme said.

"So nice to see you again, Padme. You always were a vision of loveliness. Now, I believe the Emperor would very much enjoy your company," Dooku said.

"The Emperor?!" Padme exclaimed.

"Oh yes, haven't you heard, dear Chancellor? You've been dethroned. The core planets have fallen. The rest of the Republic has surrendered. Those Jedi that were not captured have fled. You and your husband have warrants out for your arrest. The Emperor himself wishes to execute you personally. Surrender to me and I'll spare your children," Dooku said.

"Mom...no!" Leia cried.

"We will never surrender to you! Go crawl back to your Master and tell him his time as Emperor will be short-lived, because my husband is going to send him back to Sith hell where he belongs...and you'll be joining him!" Padme yelled fiercely. He smirked.

"You always have to do things the hard way," Dooku said, as he reached out and grabbed her arm. Padme struggled, as he pulled her to him and locked his arm around her shoulders. Leia screamed, as a fire encircled her and Luke.

"You've just sentenced your children to death," Dooku stated.

"No...please..." Padme pleaded. They heard a terrible scream of agony and looked up, only to see that Jango Fett's face was lit with white flames. He screamed, as his body was engulfed completely.

"You'll never harm anyone again...especially not my son, you bastard!" Anakin yelled, as Jango exploded into nothingness. He simply had ceased to exist like his counterparts. Anakin lowered himself to the ground. He watched Dooku grip Padme tightly in a threatening way. He raised his hand and flail of white energy erupted from his hand, extinguishing the flames around Luke and Leia.

"Step any closer Skywalker, and I'll melt the skin off her pretty bones," Dooku threatened.

"You know, I never understood how a great man like Qui-Gon Jinn could have been trained by you. He says you too were once a great man, but you have been so twisted by evil that Dooku ceased to exist long ago. Darth Tyrannus stands in his place. Qui-Gon does not recognize you and though he once hoped you'd return to the light, he has abandoned that hope," Anakin said. Tyrannus chuckled evilly.

"Impressive speech. I loved Qui-Gon like a son, but he was a fool, just like you. So much power and yet you do not use it. You could join me, you know. Palpatine and his son can be overthrown and we would control the galaxy!" he said manically.

"You don't get it, Tyrannus...and you never will. I desire none of the so called power you speak of. I desire no glory or hero worship. She is all that matters to me. She and our children. Love...a concept you cannot possibly grasp. You will not harm them...and never will your vile existence plague the good people of this galaxy again," Anakin said fiercely.

"So confident, are you?" Dooku said, as he handled Padme roughly and wrapped his hand around her slender neck. His other hand lit with orange flames and his eyes bled crimson.

"Say goodbye to your precious angel!" Dooku screamed, as he raised his hand, intending to swipe her face with the deadly flames.

"Mom!" the twins cried. But the fire never touched Padme, for an impenetrable white bubble surrounded her and the twins. Dooku's eyes widened and then he clamped them shut, avoiding Anakin blinding gaze.

"No!" Dooku screamed, as he strode calmly toward him. Dooku screamed in agony, as the light burned at his corneas. His eyes were forced open and he was caught in Anakin's blazing stare.

"I can see all the evil deeds you've committed. And now, all your victims receive justice. You'll never hurt another soul..." Anakin said. Dooku screamed in agony, as his eyes were burned by white flames. Anakin's sheer power ignited the rest of his essence, engulfing him and finally removing him from existence. Anakin's light faded and Padme hugged him tightly.

"Luke needs to be put in the bacta tank...badly. That...monster nearly beat him to death," Padme couldn't stop the tears that cascaded down her cheeks. Anakin raised the comlink to his lips.

"Artoo, bring the ship to the arena and have Threepio prep the ship's bacta tank. Luke is hurt badly," Anakin said. He heard the little droid whirl vigilantly in response. Anakin knelt down and scooped Luke into his arms.

"It's all right now, son," Anakin said, as Luke cried out in pain, just from being moved. Luke felt his mother's soft touch on his face and he pried his eyes open, seeing both his parents peering down on him. Suddenly, he was a little boy again and was being cradled by them after waking up from a terrible nightmare. And he relaxed in his father's embrace and his mother's soothing presence. They soon reached the ship and Luke was immediately placed in the bacta tank after the jump to hyperspace.

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*Yavin IV...*

"It's good to see that you're all safe," Mace said, as he greeted the Kenobi family.

"It's good to see you too Masters. I'm just sorry we lost Naboo," Obi-Wan said sadly.

"Any word from Anakin and Padme?" Lea asked.

"Sent us a message, Anakin did. Rescued Luke they have and headed for Hoth, they are. Destroyed the fire and lightning demons,

Anakin has," Yoda said.

"That's wonderful news," Obi-Wan said. Suddenly, Whie came running toward them.

"Masters, it's Palpatine. He's addressing the galaxy on the Holonet. You need to see this!" Whie cried. They all sprinted to the conference room where the other Masters and Knights were glued to the screen. Palpatine's ugly, evil visage was before them, a twisted, cruel smile on his lips.

*Fellow citizens of the galaxy! Your Republic has crumbled in the wake of my rise to power! My Empire now rules this galaxy and the Jedi have run like cowards to hide! Your Chosen One has run too! But fear not, for these traitors will be brought to justice!" Palpatine shouted, as he motioned for two soldiers. The men came forward, dragging Depa Billaba with them.*

*"Masters Yoda and Windu, I am sure you are watching! Unless you surrender yourself to me and forfeit the place you've hidden your people, the Jedi we have take prisoner...will die," Palpatine stated.*

*"The two of you have twenty four hours to surrender. Starting with the twenty fifth hour, three of our Jedi prisoners will be publically executed! Dear Depa here will serve as an initial demonstration of what will happen to any who oppose me!" Palpatine yelled, as Jaren ignited his blade.*

"No...Depa.." Mace cried, as he looked into the eyes of his most beloved padawan. A cry of pain was wrenched from Depa, as Jaren speared her through the heart. He viciously extracted the blade and she fell dead to the cold ground.

"Depa!" Mace cried, showing more emotion than any had ever seen from him. He wrenched away from everyone and began sprinting for the docking bay.

"Master Obi-Wan, guard things here, you will. Return to Coruscant, Master Windu and I will. No more Jedi blood will be spilt, if help it, we can," Yoda said as he left for the docking bay on his hover pad...

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Palpatine cackled evilly, as he surveyed the Republic capital world that now belonged to him. Nothing would stop him this time...not even the Chosen One.

"Father...I regret to inform you of this, but the Hapan solders we sent to investigate the facility on Dantooine have reported that Skywalker's son is gone," Jaren said.

"Yes...I know. I felt both Jango and Dooku's presences be extinguished in the Force. He must not survive Hoth, Jaren. Go there personally...and kill them all. His wife...his children...and him. Expunge the Skywalker family existence from this galaxy! Only then, can we rule unchallenged!" Palpatine ordered.

"Yes My Master. I shall leave at once," Jaren said.

"Good my son. Take your mother with you. She has expressed an interest in seeing Amidala's demise herself," Palpatine said.

"Yes father," Jaren answered. Palpatine cackled evilly, as he watched his son's ship lift off and leave Coruscant.

# Painful Loss

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars.

AN: Here's chapter 19! Thanks for all the great reviews. We are nearing the finale of this story. I don't know exactly how many chapters are left, but this is the final arc of the story. I almost can't believe I am finally ending this series, because it's been a blast to write. But it will also be fun to move onto other things. After this series finishes, I will be starting the Forever Destined vignette series. It will be a series of individual stories to fill in the twenty-five year gap I left in the final chapter. I'm really looking forward to beginning it and going back to the FD series. I'm hoping to have the first one done by mid September or beginning of October, so look for it soon! Until then, enjoy the rest of the NG series, as we embark on the final fate of this series.

Never Gone III

Chapter 19: Painful Loss

It had been almost two days since they'd entered hyperspace for the journey to Hoth. The planet was so remote and Anakin had been reading up on what little was known about the planet where his youngest daughter was imprisoned. His heart ached, as he felt her pain in the Force. His little Anna-bear...so pure and bright. Her smile, like her mother's, lit up a room and made his heart swell with love and pride. Palpatine and his wretched son would pay ten fold for hurting his family like this. And he would make certain that this was the last time the Sith would hurt anyone...ever. Palpatine and his son were the last in a dead race. All the Sith holocrons in existence were either lost in the explosion on Korriban or the fire in the Jedi Temple. All the Sith knowledge was dead and now only lived in Palpatine and his son. It would die with them for good and the galaxy would be free of such an evil. He knew full well that there would always be evil men, but with the Sith race completely wiped out, the galaxy would

be ultimately safer and more capable of dealing with the other evils of men.

"Daddy," Leia's voice cut through his deep thoughts.

"Hi princess," he said.

"Mom is draining the bacta tank. She needs your help to lift Luke out," Leia said. Anakin sprung from his chair in the cockpit and walked back through the cabin and to the far corner of the ship where their medical bay was.

"Angel...how is he?" he asked, as he looked at his son. His face was pale, but had regained much more color than he'd had two days ago.

"His wounds have closed and the bacta has taken care of the infection in his blood. He's...he's going to be okay," she stuttered, as she put a hand over her mouth, the tears streaming down her cheeks.

"If...if we'd gotten to him any later...I don't think he would have made it. What if...what if we don't get to Anna in time," Padme broke down in sobs against his chest.

"We will angel...we have to believe that," Anakin stroked her long hair. The tank finished draining and Anakin pulled the mask off Luke, before hefting him out of the tank and onto a med table. Threepio placed the vital reader over his torso and began taking readings.

"The infection has been dispelled, Miss Padme. His vitals are normal, though he has a low grade fever. I do believe his fever is simply an after effect and should dissipate soon. With plenty of rest, Master Luke will be back to full health in no time," Threepio reported. The three Skywalker's let out a sigh of relief, just as Luke's eyes began to flutter open. Padme was by his side in an instant, brushing his wet hair from his face.

"It's mommy, sweetheart. Can you hear me?" Padme asked.

"Mom..." he asked weakly.

"I'm here sweetie," she cried. Anakin came beside her and looked down at him.

"Hey there tough guy. You had us all pretty worried," he said, tears threatening to fall from his eyes as well.

"Well...you know me. I'm...like you. Trouble...kind of follows me wherever I go," Luke joked.

"Well, I guess that's a sign of normalcy. You still think your stupid jokes are funny," Leia said, as she came up to him on the other side.

"Hey sis...did ya miss me?" he asked.

"You wish," she replied sarcastically, as she hugged him.

"If you *ever* scare me like that again...I'll kick your sorry butt," she whispered to him.

"I love you too," he smirked at her.

"Do you think you can try to sit up?" Anakin asked. Luke nodded, as his father helped him. He was a little woozy, but felt okay after a few seconds.

"Can I get you anything, sweetheart?" Padme asked.

"Um...actually, I'm starving," Luke said. Anakin laughed.

"The Skywalker appetite. He's going to be fine," Anakin declared. Padme kissed his forehead.

"I'll make you some hot soup," Padme said, as she rushed off to the kitchenette. Anakin helped Luke move to the sofa in the living area and Padme brought his soup soon after.

"How much longer until we get to Hoth?" Luke asked.

"About another twenty-nine hours," Anakin replied.

"Man, this place is really out in the middle of nowhere," Luke said.

"It's a barren wasteland of ice and snow. But we'll get there and we'll get Anna back," Anakin assured them.

"I just can't believe Palpatine has taken over," Padme said.

"Taken over?" Luke exclaimed.

"The Republic has fallen," Leia said sadly.

"Not for long. Once we return to Coruscant, Palpatine will no longer have any demons to hide behind. It will be just him and me. And I will destroy him...once and for all," Anakin stated...

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Several pairs of boots sounded thickly on the steel floor, as they strode to the bridge with a purposeful stride. Isolder and his men escorted a elderly, yet distinguished looking man to the bridge. When they arrived, Isolder and his men knelt before Palpatine, as the man stepped forward.

"I am honored that you secured my release, my Lord," Tarkin said, with a cruel smile.

"Our Empire has finally been realized and I have chosen you to help me command it," Palpatine said. With an unexpected warning, Palpatine held his hand out and Tarkin screamed in pain, as he felt as if his legs were being crushed. He fell to the floor, writhing in pain.

"Do not think for a second that I forgotten your betrayal twenty years ago when you sided with Dooku. Should I detect even an inkling of suspicion toward you, I promise you that you shall die an excruciating death!" Palpatine yelled, as he released his hold. Tarkin scrambled to his knees and knelt humbly before the Sith Lord.

"Forgive me, My Lord. I shall not betray you," Tarkin pleaded.

"See that you don't. Now, Isolder, what do you have to report?" Palpatine asked. Isolder swallowed nervously.

"My forces have detected a lot of activity in the usually quiet Yavin system. We await your orders, My Lord," Isolder replied. Palpatine laughed evilly.

"Invade the Yavin system and find the cowards that have fled capture and kill them all," Palpatine ordered. Isolder felt dread swell in his stomach.

"Yes My Lord, I will send a legion of my soldiers at once," he replied.

"You will go with them and carry this out personally," Palpatine ordered. Isolder swallowed the bile he felt rising in his throat.

"Yes My Lord," he answered, as he rose and left quietly.

"As for you Tarkin, you will assist me in the scheduled executions I have for today. Yoda and Windu are another day late. Three more Jedi will die today," Palpatine said.

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The small Jedi shuttle exited hyperspace above Coruscant. It's occupants, Jedi Masters Yoda and Mace Windu, had finally arrived. It had taken much longer to reach Coruscant than normal, thanks to the heavy military patrols that now scoured the galaxy. Jedi lives had been sacrificed as a result of their tardiness. Yoda and Mace had felt the deaths of every single one. Palpatine had chosen padawans and Masters alike. Bultar Swan, Cin Drallig, and Ki-Adi Mundi were among the murdered Masters. Serra Keto had also fallen in response to the death of Master Drallig. Palpatine had cut her down when she had moved to attack him. In response to Serra's outburst, Palpatine had chosen three padawans to die as example of the evils he was capable of. Mace had not spoken much since Depa's death and even less since the deaths of the others. Yoda was silent too,

contemplating their ensured battle with the Sith Lord. Mace landed the shuttle and they stepped out into the sooty smelling air of the capital world. The Jedi Temple had burned to the ground completely. The Senate building was half caved in and the Galactic Market was barren of life. Palpatine's Star Destroyer sat atop the caved in Senate dome and they could see the construction of his great dark palace had begun in the background. Palpatine stood atop his ship and they could see people with him. He was going to kill again. The two Jedi Masters set off in pursuit to stop him.

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Palpatine stood on his ship next to the newly freed Tarkin. The Hapan soldiers restrained three Jedi and Palpatine turned to them. One was Plo Koon and the others were two young padawans. One about sixteen and the other no more than twelve.

"You evil bastard!" Koon spat at him.

"They are children! What kind of sick degenerate murders innocent children! Kill me if you must, you monster, but do not harm these children!" Koon pleaded. The little twelve-year-old boy had begun to cry, while the sixteen-year-old girl was trying her hardest not to. Palpatine stepped toward Plo Koon with a cruel snarl and grabbed the young girl by the arm. She yelped, as he brought his blade to her throat.

"I was going to execute you first, Master Jedi. But since you have so expressed an interest in the fate of these two little slime puddles, then I shall grant your interest," Palpatine said, as he drew back his blade. The young girl cried out and shut her eyes, waiting for the pain that would come before her life was snuffed out.

"STOP!" a voice roared. Palpatine smirked and turned to look at the voice that had barked the command. His grip on the child did not lessen at all.

"Well, well, you have finally shown your ugly faces. Too bad that it's too late to save this one's life!" Palpatine growled. The girl screamed,

as Palpatine thrust his blade forward. The pain never came to her, but there was a brief cry from Plo Koon. The blade protruded from his back, as he had thrown himself in its path to save the child's life.

"Foolish Jedi scum!" Palpatine spat, as he extracted the blade. Plo Koon fell dead at his feet. Mace and Yoda ignited their blades.

"Nala...take Benji and get as far away from here as you can," Mace told the crying girl. She picked up the sobbing little boy and began running. The Hapan soldiers and Tarkin stepped back, as the two Jedi Masters circled the Sith Lords.

"So...we finally meet in battle my friends. It really is too bad that you both shall perish by my hand," Palpatine said, as he raised his blood red blade.

"We will see. No more innocent lives will be taken by your hand if we can help it!" Mace said. Palpatine cackled.

"Poor Master Windu...I can see that you are still sobbing over the death of dear sweet Depa. I would expect more from you, Master Windu. Some might say that you...had a little attachment to her," Palpatine goaded. Unshed tears could be seen in Mace's eyes.

"You leave Depa out of this..." Mace growled.

"Oh come off your pedestal, Master Windu! I killed your lover...and now you want revenge!" Palpatine goaded. Mace let out a cry of rage, as he jumped head long into battle with the wicked Sith Lord. It was true...though Mace and Depa had been discreet about their relationship. In the last fifteen years, Mace had come to accept love as a part of life, as had Depa. And once they had accepted it, they had realized their feelings for each other. Mace loved her...and now she was gone. Yoda watched his former padawan fight the Sith Lord, ready to jump in at a second's notice...

"Sire...two of our fleets have arrived in the Yavin system. Scanners indicated that they are possibly on the fourth moon. We await your orders,"

"Thank you Commander," Isolder said sadly. His ship was still several hours away, but he supposed he should not wait any longer. If he did, it was likely the Jedi would sense him coming. This was the last thing he wanted to do...but he also did not want to die. He was a coward and he would fully admit to it. Perhaps it would be better if it was over before he arrived.

"Tell General Benjix to being his invasion..." Isolder ordered.

"Yes your highness," the commander replied. Isolder had never loathed himself more than he did right now...

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The dark, sinister tremor broke through Obi-Wan's meditation and he ran out of his room in a sprint. He ran to the entrance of the temporary base and gasped in horror, as he saw the Hapan ships flying above the horizon. They had been discovered already.

"EVACUATE IMMEDIATELY!" Obi-Wan screamed. A large blast shook the structure violently and permacrete rained down upon them.

"HEAD INTO THE JUNGLE! WE'LL HIDE IN THERE!" Obi-Wan cried. Battle broke out, as Hapan soldiers invaded the base on foot. Blaster fire rang out and light sabers were ignited with a series of snap-hisses. Jocasta Nu was one of the first Jedi to fall. Obi-Wan stared at the blaster hole in the elderly woman's forehead. She'd been a constant in the archives as long as he'd been alive and seeing her come to her end in such a horrible way struck at his heart.

"Jay and Jeena, take your mother and go find safety," Obi-Wan said.

"But dad..." Jeena argued.

"GO NOW!" Obi-Wan screamed, as he turned back to the fight. Mass chaos ensued, as Jedi and soldiers alike fell. Explosions racked the surface, as Bail Organa held Kira close, as they made their way through the chaos.

"Stop right there!" a soldier called, as he leveled his blaster at them.

"General Benjix, I have found Senator Organa!" he called. The General turned.

"Arrest her and take her to my ship. The Emperor will be pleased," the General said.

"You won't be taking my daughter anywhere," Bail roared, as he stood in front of her. The General leveled his blaster at the King of Alderaan.

"Move now...or I'm afraid I'll be forced to kill you, your highness," the General spat.

"Run Kira," Bail ordered.

"Daddy no," Kira refused. Bail spun around and shoved his daughter toward the place where everyone was fleeing. Blaster fire rang out and Kira screamed.

"DADDY!" she screamed. Bail fell to the ground, a wound in his chest. Kira knelt beside him, sobbing uncontrollably.

"Daddy!" she screamed.

"Run Kira," he rasped.

"Arrest her," General Benjix ordered. As two Soldiers descended on her, Obi-Wan swept in and killed them both and then slew the General.

"Kira...I'm sorry," Obi-Wan knelt beside her. Bail raised a shaky hand and caressed his daughter's damp cheek.

"My...beautiful little...girl," Bail choked.

"Daddy...please hang on," Kira sobbed.

"You...you make sure that Luke takes...care of you for...me," Bail rasped.

"No Daddy...no..." Kira sobbed.

"Ben...keep her...safe..." Bail rasped. A few tears cascaded down Obi-Wan's cheeks.

"I'll protect her like my own...my friend," Obi-Wan said.

"Kira...I...I love you. Go," Bail said.

"I love you too daddy," she sobbed. Bail's hand fell and his eyes dulled. Obi-Wan closed his eyes, as grief overwhelmed him.

"Daddy! Daddy...no!" Kira screamed. Obi-Wan reached over and closed Bail's eyes. More blaster fire rained down around them.

"Kira...we must go," Obi-Wan said, as he hauled her to her feet and led her into the jungle where those who had managed to escape had. The battleground was littered with the unfortunate ones who had not been so lucky...

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Luke shot up from the sofa in a cold sweat.

"Kira..." he cried. He looked around at his family. His father held his mother and sister as they all sobbed together.

"Kira's father..." he said. Padme got up and went to sit beside him.

"I'm so sorry baby," Padme cried, as she hugged him.

"I should be with her. She needs me..." Luke cried.

"You will be son. As soon as we get Anna, I'm going to end this once and for all. Palpatine is going to pay for all the innocent people he's killed..." Anakin said, as tears streamed down his cheeks. Bail had been a close family friend for a long time and had always been good to them. And Anakin would be damned if he let all these innocent people die in vain. Just a few more hours and they would arrive on Hoth...

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Mace thrust forward with a vicious jab, but it was parried by the Sith Lord he battled furiously. The Vaapad technique was an aggressive fighting style and Mace filtered all his pain and anger into the technique, turning it into a positive use of the emotions. Vaapad was hard to control and maintain without slipping to the dark side. Indeed, he had nearly lost Depa to it once and had he not happened to be there at the time, he probably would have. He slashed and parried to avoid Sidious' own vicious strikes.

"You are a fool...Master Windu, if you think you can defeat me," Sidious hissed.

"I care nothing of my own fate. I am here only to stop you from taking more innocent lives! No one here may be able to stop you...but the Chosen One can!" Mace said.

"Ignorant fool...Skywalker does not scare me! He will fall...just like the rest of you! Then...no one will challenge my rule!" Palpatine bellowed.

"It is you that are the fool. Skywalker does scare you...and that's why you had your minions kidnap his children! You know that once Anakin returns to Coruscant, you reign of evil will end. Your attempts to keep him from coming back here are futile. Your son will pay for his crimes at Anakin's hand. The Force will tolerate your kind of terror no longer," Mace stated. Palpatine howled in rage, as he brought his saber down on Mace with a vengeance. He tripped Mace and cackled, as he brought his blade down on the Master's prone

form. His crimson blade sizzled, as an emerald blade intercepted his attack.

"Right Master Windu is. No matter the outcome of this battle, destroyed...you will be," Yoda said.

"Fools...you have no idea of the power I'm capable of! My powers crippled your Chosen One! My only mistake was not making sure he was finished for good!" Palpatine howled, as he unleashed his red Force lightning on the two Jedi Masters. Yoda was thrown several feet. He rolled across the steel ship's surface and hung upon the edge, digging his nails in. Another blast of Force lightning struck him and he was hurled off the edge and hit the ground with a painful thud. The small Master struggled to get up, but the red Force lightning was crippling. His limbs felt heavy and immobile, but he continued to struggled to regain his ability. Meanwhile, Mace was at the mercy of the vengeful Sith Lord and Yoda heard him scream in agony.

Mace cried out, as Palpatine poured Force lightning into the venerable Master. Mace writhed in agony, as the lightning suddenly stopped. Palpatine snarled down at him, as Mace struggled to get up. Once he reached his knees, Palpatine embedded his foot into his back and pushed him to the ground. Mace rolled away and crawled to his knees. Finally, he stood painfully and raised his violet blade to block another slash from Palpatine. He wheezed heavily, as the Force of Palpatine's earlier attack had collapsed his right lung. The Sith Lord snarled evilly and thrust his knee into the Master's good lung. Palpatine viciously grabbed Mace's head and connected it with steel floor beneath them. Mace screamed, as blood cascaded down his face from his cracked skull.

"You always were quite the nuisance and I will enjoy snuffing your life out once and for all," Palpatine goaded, as he kicked Mace onto his back. His blade hummed in Mace's ear and the Jedi Master's heart pounded wildly in his chest. Crimson blood leaked from his head and his lips, as he found it increasingly difficult to breath.

Palpatine swiped his blade across Mace's throat and a scream died on his lips, as blackness began to invade his senses.

"If you wish to continue our battle, Master Yoda, then I will expect you to follow me inside my ship. But if you choose to run like I coward...I will not blame you, for death awaits you as well!" Palpatine cackled, as he kicked Mace aside and descended into his ship from the top hatch. Yoda slowly crawled up onto the ship and dragged himself to his dying friend's side. The angry laceration across Mace's throat had not severed his throat completely, allowing him the slow death of suffocation. Yoda knelt beside him and bowed his head sadly. Yoda clutched Mace's hand, as he stared into the man's dark eyes, which were quickly dulling, as the life drained from them.

"Find peace in the Force...my child..." Yoda said sadly, freely crying. Mace made a choking noise, as he could no longer get air. Mace Windu's life slowly faded and Yoda watched, as his body faded into nothingness. Yoda clutched Mace's cloak that had been left behind.

"Join you soon I will...my friend," Yoda said, as he hobbled painfully to the top hatch of Palpatine's ship. He crawled in, ready to meet his fate...whatever it may be...

# Ice Covered Hell

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars.

AN: Here's chapter 20! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone III

Chapter 20: Ice Covered Hell

Anakin slowly brought the ship into the frigid Hoth atmosphere. It was as barren and dead as he had imagined. Artoo whirled beside him.

"Are you picking up on anything?" Anakin asked. Artoo suggested heading east and Anakin steered the ship in that direction. After several minutes of scouring the lands with his eyes, he spotted steam rising in the distance.

"It would make sense that they built the facility underground, I suppose," Anakin said. Anakin landed the ship and turned on the thermal shields.

"Keep the thermal shields up, so the engines don't freeze," Anakin said, as he walked in back. His family stood waiting, armed and ready to do whatever it took to get their little Anna back. He wanted to argue with them and order them to stay here. But he knew that would never work. It was probably best if they all stayed together and he had a feeling it would take all of them to rescue Anna and Chewie.

"Everyone stick together. We'll be safer that way," Anakin said, as he took Padme's hand. Luke and Leia joined hands and they went out into the blistering and they went out into the blistering cold, wrapped in heavy cloaks. They found the vents of steam and saw that they led to a long, narrow cave.

"Daddy, I see a door over there!" Leia said. Sure enough, as the cave opened up, they saw a manmade door. Littered around the cave were crates of weapons and storage bins full of scrape parts. The cave also held a stench of dead animals and there were several mangled corpses of dead TaunTaun's. Something didn't feel right and Leia's scream confirmed his apprehension. A giant creature emerged and growled viciously. It was white and stood on two legs, nearly twelve feet high. It's fangs and claws were huge and stained with blood...and it looked hungry. It made a swipe for Leia, but Anakin's light saber blazed to life and severed the Wampa's arm. The animal wailed in pain and made another swipe at the four intruders. Anakin sliced off his other arm, before using a Force jump to propel himself up to eye level with the beast. Leia and Padme winced away, as Anakin beheaded the creature. It fell to the ground with a loud thud.

"Well, so much for having the element of surprise," Anakin said, as he moved to the door. He heard his wife draw her blaster and his children ignite their blades. The door slid open, once Anakin had cut through the panel on the wall and strangely, there was no one in the dark corridor of the compound. That made Anakin even more nervous. As they slowly walked, it got colder and colder.

"Daddy...the floor..." Leia said quietly. Anakin looked down and noticed the floor was freezing underneath them. The walls around them were freezing as well.

"Where is my daughter, Ventress!" Anakin demanded. A low, evil chuckle was heard in response.

"Your precious little Queen is the least of your worries right now, Chosen One," Jaren goaded, though they could not see him. Suddenly, Leia screamed, as she found her feet froze to the floor. Icy webbing began to creep up her legs. Luke ignited his blade and cut her free. But the webbing came alive on the wall and constricted around the twins, taking Luke's light saber from him. Anakin started slicing through the webbing, but a strong gust of wind threw him and

Padme back. They went sliding along the slippery floor and watched in horror, as the twins disappeared.

"NOOOO!" Anakin screamed. A white aura blazed around him and flails of white energy fought against the powerful wind. He pulled Padme into his arms and held her tightly.

"You won't lay a hand on her, you bastard!" he yelled to the wind demon.

"She belongs to me! You won't cheat death again...Skywalker!" Palo hissed. Anakin struggled to stand up and Padme clung tightly to him, burying her face in his chest. Anakin stared at the swirling cyclone before them, as his bright shield was the only thing between them. Suddenly, Anakin screamed in pain, as Red Force lightning hit Anakin in the back, shattering his shield. An arm reached out from the Cyclone and grabbed Padme's leg. She screamed and Anakin held her tighter.

"NO...you won't take her from me!" Anakin roared. Another blast of Force lightning slammed into his back and he screamed in agony. Padme sobbed against him, as his grip slackened.

"Save our babies..." she whispered to him, before she was yanked from his arms.

"NO...PADME...NOOOO!" he screamed, as she disappeared into the cyclone, which also disappeared once it had what it wanted. Anakin pulled himself to his feet, despite the pain coursing through his body.

"Where are you?!" Anakin screamed.

"Show yourself, you coward! Or can you only attack me from the shadows?! At least that son of bitch that calls himself your father can fight me face to face! Does he know that his son is worthless coward!" Anakin screamed. Rage evident in his voice. Anakin heard the footsteps behind him and spun around, clutching his light saber.

"Where is my family, you psychotic bastard?" Anakin demanded.

"Ventress is torturing your stupid brats...and Palo is...well, I think you and I both know exactly what he's doing to your wife," Jaren goaded. Anakin's knuckles were white, as he clenched them angrily. Jaren laughed evilly, as the floor underneath them sunk several floors, until they were standing in a large room. Jaren ignited his crimson blade and Anakin ignited his sapphire saber.

"You wanted a fight...and now you'll have one!" Jaren said, as he launched at the Chosen One. Anakin raised his weapon to parry the Sith apprentice's...

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Luke heard Chewie rawl in despair, as he came around. Leia was crumpled beside him and he laid her flat on her back. He breathed a sigh of relief, as he found a steady pulse. He looked up at the Wookie.

"Chewie!" he said in relief, but horror washed over his features, as he spotted his youngest sister's body cradled in Chewie's arms. Her skin was pale white and her lips were a bluish color.

"Oh Force...Anna..." Luke cried, as he knelt beside Chewie

"Luke..." he heard Leia whimper.

"Leia...come quickly..." he cried.

"Oh my...no, tell me she's not..." Leia couldn't finished her sentence. Tears streamed down Luke's face.

"Her pulse is so faint, Leia. She's barely here," Luke sobbed.

"We have to get her warmer," Leia said, as she pulled off her heavy winter cloak.

"Here...lift her up Chewie, so I can get this under her," Leia said. Chewie did so and Leia wrapped her tightly in it. Luke handed her his cloak and Leia wrapped it tightly around her, including her head.

"Well...isn't that the sweetest sight..." an icy voice hissed. Luke whirled around and saw Ventress' evil form, standing there.

"You witch...stay away from us!" Leia screamed, as she and Chewie huddled around Anna to keep her warm. Ventress held out her hands and two long ice blades extended into weapons. She held her thick creations and pointed them at Luke.

"I will enjoy murdering you and your sisters immensely," Asaaj sneered.

"Only a coward fights an enemy who is unarmed," Luke spat. Ventress' cold eyes blazed with fury.

"How dare you speak to me that way, you diseased little whelp!" she howled, as she hurled a volley of icicles at him. Luke covered his face with his arms and shielded his sisters from the sharp objects. He felt a few slice at his skin in various places.

"I just call them like I see them," Luke said, as he lowered his arms. She barred her ugly teeth in anger. She clutched Luke's light saber and hurled it at him.

"You want a fight, you little rodent, then you'll have a fight!" Ventress screamed, as she charged at him. Luke ignited his blade and blocked her, just as she brought her massive ice blades, crashing down on him...

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Padme struggled with the pair of binders around her wrists. The shackles were attached to a stalagmite in the freezing cavern she was in. She shivered, as the icy wind blew around her. She whimpered and struggled harder, as the wind materialized into the form of a man.

"No..." she cried softly, as the wind demon slithered toward her.

"At long last..." he sneered.

"I finally have you in my grasp again," Palo said, as his red eyes bored into hers.

"And this time...you will not escape me, my rose..." he hissed, as he lifted her chin with his fingers.

"Keep your hands off me, you sick freak!" Padme spat at him.

"Defiant as ever, I see. But it does not matter. You can fight me all you want, but you cannot escape me this time," he hissed in her ear. She whimpered in protest, as she felt his lips and tongue at the spot where her jaw and ear met.

"Time has preserved you remarkably..." he hissed, as he grasped her hips.

"You have not changed hardly at all. I've waited a lifetime to claim you...and now my wait is finally over," he said, as he hands slid up her sides and under the top of her white battle uniform.

"Get your hands off me!" Padme growled. He ignored her protest and his lips tacked her throat. She whimpered, as she felt his teeth grazing her skin, nipping and almost biting at her flesh. She eyed her blaster off to the side with her utility belt and cloak. She knew she couldn't kill him with it, but if she could free herself, she had a slim chance of escaping or perhaps even holding him off until Anakin could come for her. She remembered everything Anakin had taught her and reached out to the blaster with the Force. The blaster shook and Padme tried harder.

*"Please...help me..."* she pleaded to the Force. It finally lifted into the air and slowly into her grasp. With all her might, she drove the butt of the blaster into his skull and then blasted the lock on her chains. She fired an entire round into Palo's chest, even though she knew it

would not kill him. She only hoped to slow him down long enough to get away.

"Damn it...you little bitch!" Palo screamed. Padme ran deeper into the dark, cold cave, weaving around stalagmites.

"You can't escape me...Padme! You're mine!" he screamed fiercely. She looked around hopelessly for a place to hide, as she ran deeper into the cave. She felt the wind gust around her and tears streamed down her cheeks. She felt his tendrils wrapping around her body and her run was ended, as he jerked her toward him.

"Stop fighting the inevitable, my beautiful rose," he said, holding her in a vice-like grip.

"I've wanted you since the moment I first saw you when you were just a girl. But you cast me to the shadows to watch you from afar!" he screamed at her. Padme winced and struggled against his grip.

"I thought of nothing but you since that first kiss you gave me," Palo said, as he forced his lips onto hers. He yelped in pain when Padme sunk her teeth into his bottom lip. Padme yelped in pain, as he slapped her angrily.

"You're sick. You were sick then and you're sick now!" Padme yelled.

"I only wanted to love you!" he screamed.

"No...you wanted to own me! You wanted to possess me! You don't know what love is! If you love me, then you'd let me go! If you love me, then you'd want me to be happy! But all you care about is claiming me like a piece of property! I am not some prize for you to take!" Padme screamed. Palo grabbed her arm roughly and slapped her again.

"It does not matter what you do to me, because I will never be yours! You can beat me...and even rape me...but my heart will always belong to Anakin!" Padme said fiercely. Palo snarled and gripped her

so tightly, she felt as if her arms would snap. She whimpered, as he put his hand around her slender neck.

"I'll get what I want from you and I'll never let him have you back. If it comes down to letting him have you or killing you...then I think you know what I'll choose," Palo growled, as he dragged her along, back to his lair...

---

Prince Isolder watched the refuge facility on Yavin IV burn to the ground. He sighed sadly, wondering how it had come to this.

"Sir, we have captured a few of the Rebels. We are still searching the jungle for others. But General Kenobi, his family, and Senator Organa are now in our custody," his Lieutenant said. Isolder approached the group, whose wrists were secured with Force binders.

"Well, well, if it isn't Prince Isore himself. How many more innocent people will you kill today?" Obi-Wan asked in disgust.

"I like this no more than you, Master Kenobi. But I have no choice in the matter. I'm saving my planet by cooperating with Palpatine," he replied.

"While the rest of the galaxy suffers!" Lea spat angrily.

"I am deeply sorry for all that has happened," he said.

"Save your apologies, you swine! Your men killed me father! He was unarmed and he was only trying to protect me, you bastard!" Kira screamed, as she broke down in sobs. Isolder averted his eyes from her piercing stare.

"Take them to my ship and keep searching. We'll leave for Coruscant in an hour with whatever prisoner we have by then," Isolder ordered.

"Yes sir," his men responded.

---

The two light sabers hissed and crackled, as they met in a deadlock. Anakin's tunic had been ripped to shreds by Jaren's oppressive red lightning, so much so, that he'd torn off the ruined remnants, leaving his torso bare. He couldn't seem to get past the red lightning and its strength compared to the blue lightning was at least triple. He knew he couldn't take too many more hits from it. Therefore, in Master Windu's memory, he'd slipped into Vaapad, which increased his speed and aggression, yet channeling the rage he felt into a positive manner. Jaren's fighting style did not favor Vaapad and he was shadowboxing. Jaren growled and whipped around, clashing sabers with Anakin furiously.

"You can't win...you must know that," Anakin said calmly.

"You have no idea what I'm capable of!" Jaren screamed, as he hurled red Force lightning at Anakin. Anakin flipped out of its path and an explosion shook the room violently. Anakin stood ready for his next assault and Jaren contemplated his odds. If he continued to fight this way, it was likely Skywalker would destroy him. Therefore, it was time to play dirty.

"Bring her..." he whispered into the Force.

---

Padme whimpered in disgust, as her captor pressed himself against her back, kissing her throat. His grimy hands were everywhere, touching her in places only her husband touched.

"Let's get you out of these clothes, my love. I wish to claim you at last," he hissed.

"No...please don't do this..." Padme pleaded, as his hands started tugging at her clothes.

"Nooo!" Padme screamed, as she fought and kicked him in the groin. He howled in rage and grabbed her hair, shoving her forward. She screamed in pain, as her head collided with the stone stalagmite

nearest to her. It caught her above the right eyebrow and crimson blood trickled down next to her eye. She felt dizzy and nauseous, as she fell to the ground, dazed.

"I didn't want to hurt you, Padme. But you leave me no choice," Palo said through clenched teeth. She cried out and covered her face with her arms, as he raised his fists.

*"Bring her..."* Palo heard the order and growled.

*"No...she's mine..." he hissed.*

*"Bring her to me...or I'll destroy you myself, you useless slime!"* Palo obeyed and grabbed Padme's arm, hauling her to her feet.

"Master Jaren has called for your presence, my sweet. We'll have to continue later. Maybe by then, you'll not be able to fight me any longer," he said, as the wind surrounded them and they disappeared...

---

Anakin parried another vicious strike and leapt forward to deliver his own upward thrust, which Jaren blocked. Anakin pressed up, his muscles gleaming with sweat and burning in protest. His thrust knocked Jaren off balance, causing him to stumble back. Anakin brought his saber over his head and brought it crashing down on the Sith's blade. Jaren gritted his teeth and struggled against the Jedi's surprising physical strength. Suddenly, in a gust of wind, Palo appeared, clutching Padme in his grasp.

"This better be good. We were just about to get better acquainted," Palo sneered, as he brushed his hand along her cheek. She shrugged away in disgust and Anakin's blood boiled.

"Let her go, you sick bastard!" Anakin roared.

"Sorry Jedi...but she's mine now," he snarled. Anakin's eyes flashed with the bright light of the Force and Palo immediately covered his

eyes, howling in rage, before disappearing to avoid the Jedi's gaze.

"Like hell she is," Anakin growled.

"Anakin..." she said, as she started toward him. Jaren smirked and red Force lightning erupted from his fingertips.

"NOOO...PADME!" he screamed, as he hurled himself in front of her. He screamed in agony, as the Force lightning slammed into his back. Anakin twisted and grabbed Padme, before rolling out of the lightning's path. Anakin's chest heaved, as he drew air into his lungs.

"Ani..." Padme said, as she put her arms around him.

"You fool...you walked into that just as I knew you would. Your need to love and protect that wench makes you weak, just as my father said," Jaren cackled. Padme glared at the Sith, as he prepared to continue his attack. The burns on her husband's back were singing and he was struggling to overcome the pain.

"Two lovers...about to die in each other's arms. How poetic..." Jaren sneered, as he ignited his blade.

"This bastard needs to die," Padme growled, as she took a vibro knife from her husband's belt. Jaren roared a battle cry, as he advanced on them. Padme hurled the knife at him, hoping to at least hit him somewhere and slow him down until Anakin could recover more. Jaren roared in immense pain, as the knife went into his left eye...completely destroying the tissue. Padme winced away with a yelp and then looked back in disbelief. Jaren continued to scream in pain, as blood gushed down his face. Anakin was gaining his bearing and turned to look. His eyes widened.

"You did that?" he asked. She shrugged.

"Great aim, angel," he said, kissing her hand.

"Stay back," he told her, as he stood up and ignited his blade.

"It's over Jaren...you've lost," Anakin said, as he calmly approached the Sith apprentice.

"That whore will pay for this!" he screamed, as he raised his hand. Anakin swooped in and severed his left arm, before he could hurl Force lightning at Padme.

"NOOOOO!" Jaren screamed, as he hurled red Force lightning at Anakin. But his powers were weakening and the red lightning faded to blue...which was no match for Anakin. The Jedi caught it in his palm and his eyes glowed brightly with the power of the light. Flails of white energy struck Jaren and threw him flat on his back. The Sith looked up, only to see an orb of crackling white energy forming in Anakin's outstretched palms. Jaren screamed, as the beam of white light extended from Anakin's hands. There was a huge explosion that rumbled through the entire compound. Anakin stepped back and went to Padme. When the smoke cleared, only ashes remained. Jaren was dead. Padme enveloped him in a hug and sighed in relief.

"Can you sense where the kids are?" she asked. He nodded.

"Just a few levels down from here," he said. They were about to go and find the nearest lift when a woman's voice stopped them.

"Don't move, Jedi scum!" Ta'a Chume cried.

"Put your hands up!" she barked. Anakin did so, as Padme still clung to him. He looked down and saw her clutching a blaster that had been on his belt. He hadn't even seen her pluck it from his belt. He smirked.

"I love you..." he said. She smiled.

"I know," she replied.

"You too, dear Amidala. Come out and put your hands up! You killed my son, Jedi, and now you and your wife will pay!" she screamed. Padme leapt out and fired her blaster, before Ta'a could react. The

blaster bolt hit her squarely in the forehead, killing her instantly. Her body slumped to the floor in a heap.

"Great aim...again," he said, as they joined hands and searched for the nearest lift. They needed to find their children fast and rescue them from the last two demons...

# Strengthening Rebellion

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars. I always feel like I'm stating the obvious here.

AN: Here's chapter 21! Thanks for all the great reviews, as always. Enjoy the chapter!

Never Gone III

Chapter 21: Strengthening Rebellion

The Hapan soldiers marched their prisoners toward Isolder's Cruiser. Once aboard, they were secured with the other prisoners and the ship took off. The last to be tossed in the cell were Aayla and her padawan, Austin Martin. He was the same age as Jeena and a good friend to her. He was tall, with a lanky, yet athletic build and had chocolate brown hair with matching eyes, which Jeena considered to be dreamy. His padawan braid swung by his ear, as he coughed.

"Austin...are you okay?" Jeena asked, as she knelt beside him.

"I think so..." he replied.

"Those brutes kicked him in the chest twice after they disarmed us. I think he may have some bruised ribs, even broken perhaps," Aayla fretted. Jeena helped Austin lay down, while Aayla lifted his tunic and examined his ribs. He hissed, as she gently prodded the bruised area.

"Well, I think they're just bruised thankfully," Aayla reported.

"Good..." he said, as he tried to sit up.

"No you don't, padawan. Jeena, make sure he lays still," Aayla said, as she went to Obi-Wan and Jeena.

"Is he injured seriously?" Obi-Wan asked.

"Just a few bruised ribs, but we'll all be worse off than that once we reach Coruscant," Aayla said. Kit placed his hand on her shoulder.

"It will be all right. Besides, Master Ti and Master Kenobi believe we can take control of the ship," Kit said.

"But how?" Aayla asked.

"By using Austin's injuries to get them to open this cell to let a healer in. That's all we'll need. If we can take Isolder prisoner, the rest of his crew will obey us to ensure his safety," Obi-Wan said. Aayla sighed.

"All right. What is your plan?" she asked...

Austin tried sitting up again, but Jeena stopped him.

"Sorry tough guy, but you shouldn't be moving those ribs much," Jeena said. He sighed and laid back.

"Well, at least one good thing has come from this," he said.

"What's that?" she asked.

"I get a beautiful nurse," he replied. Jeena blushed furiously and looked away shyly. Jeena looked back at him, as he smiled at her. She smiled back, as Aayla returned.

"Master Kenobi has a plan to get us out of here, so polish up your acting skills, Aust," Aayla said. Austin and Jeena looked at each other, as she began explaining the plan to them.

---

Two soldiers rushed into the prison block, as they heard pained screams coming from the prison cell.

"What the hell is going on?!" one of the soldiers shouted. They observed a young man, writhing on the floor and coughing violently.

"He has broken ribs and is bleeding internally!" Aayla shouted.

"He can't breathe! He must have a punctured lung!" Kit told them. Jeena sprinted to the cell bars.

"He's dying! Please...he needs a healer!" she cried. The soldiers looked at one another.

"What is all the commotion?" Isolder asked, as he arrived.

"This boy is dying, thanks to your men!" Obi-Wan yelled.

"Please...he needs a healer!" Jeena pleaded, real tears streaming down her cheeks.

"Get this boy to the med bay and have his injuries mended," Isolder said. The two soldiers opened the cell and stepped in. Bultar Swan kicked the first one in the abdomen. As he doubled over in pain, she hit him on the back of the neck, knocking him out. Shaak Ti took care of the other in a similar fashion, as Obi-Wan grabbed Isolder. He was about to scream, but Obi-Wan warned against it.

"Don't say a word," Kenobi warned. Isolder remained frozen in fear.

"We are taking over this ship. Cooperate and we won't kill you," Obi-Wan said. Isolder nodded mutely.

"Where are out weapons?" he asked.

"Locked in a storage bin in the cargo area," Isolder choked in fear. Obi-Wan plucked the blaster from Isolder's belt and pressed it to the back of his head.

"Lead the way," Obi-Wan said. The others remained and Obi-Wan returned sometime later, having successfully gotten past other crew members. Each Jedi, which was about thirty, called their weapons to their hands from the bin and Obi-Wan gave his blaster to Kira. The grieving young woman advanced on Isolder and pressed the barrel to his forehead. Tears streamed down her cheeks.

"Oh Gods..." Isolder cried in fear.

"Kira...no..." Obi-Wan gently chided.

"He deserves to die," she said through clenched teeth.

"You're right, he probably does. He's cowardly scum, but your father wouldn't want this. He was a good man and a great leader. He raised you in that image. He died protecting his child...and there is no more honorable death. Don't dishonor his memory with more killing. He deserves far worse than death and he will pay for his crimes, but not like this," Obi-Wan pleaded to her. She lowered the blaster, as tears poured down her face. Lea embraced her tightly, rocking her gently, as if she was her own and Kira sobbed.

"Do you see the pain you've caused?" Obi-Wan asked the prince.

"Of course I do. I never wanted anyone to die," he replied.

"Yet, your miserable life was more important, right?" Obi-Wan goaded.

"I cannot change who I am. But I am your prisoner now. Therefore, you may do your best to set things right," Isolder said.

"Exactly. And I expect full cooperation. We're changing course and going to Naboo. I can't liberate Coruscant without Anakin, so we'll start on Naboo," Obi-Wan said. Everyone agreed. Isolder ordered his crew to obey the Jedi and they did so at his command...

---

Luke blocked Ventress' ice blades with his saber. She snarled and pressed down on him harshly. Luke twisted his body and leapt out from under her. With a fierce battle cry, Luke brought his saber down and sliced through her ice blades. She howled in rage and kicked him in the gut, sending him sailing back against the wall with a hard thud.

"Your father has taught you well...but it will not be enough to defeat me," she hissed, as she placed her cold hand around his neck. Her breath turned his cheek blue and Luke slowly felt her cold spreading through his body.

"Say goodnight, brat," she hissed. Suddenly, before she could start freezing his internal organs, a bright shield surrounded him. His cheeks regained color and the light warmed him. She clenched her eyes shut and stumbled back, screaming in anger.

"Get away from our son," Anakin growled, as he drove his blade through the cell lock and swung the barred door open.

"Oh my God...Anna..." Padme cried, as she rushed to Leia's side. Leia was quietly crying.

"I can't get her to wake up, mom," Leia sobbed. Padme touched her daughter's cold cheek and recoiled in shock.

"Oh God...she's so cold. We have to get her back to the ship," Padme cried. Ventress sneered.

"You're not taking the brat anywhere," her attention shifted to Anakin, who was staring at his little girl.

"I killed her Skywalker. You killed me all those years ago...and I killed her in return. Revenge is sweet," Ventress cackled. A tear slid down Anakin's cheek, as he watched Padme pump their daughter's chest and breath into her mouth. He felt the anguish swelling inside him and grabbed Ventress by the neck, lifting her up. She sputtered and choked, as Anakin barred his white teeth.

"The only person...that is going to die today you sick, evil bitch...is you!" Anakin roared in agony, as her eyes lit on fire with white flames. Anakin tossed her away, as she screamed and was consumed by white flames. Her voice was squelched, as her existence was expunged forever. The white aura of flames still surrounded Anakin, as he leaned down and scooped Anna into his

arms. Padme and the twins watched in awe, as the color began to slowly return to Anna's skin. Padme sobbed tears of joy when she saw Anna take a strangled breath and begin breathing normally.

"Ani...you saved her..." Padme cried.

"We still need to get her in the bacta tank. And Chewie needs checked on too. You kept her as warm as you could until we could get here. You saved her life and we'll be forever grateful," Chewie rawled and patted Anna's head affectionately. Together, they left the cell and found the lift. They exited the compound and back into the Wampa's cave. The Wampa was dead, but blocking their path was the wind demon.

"You're not going anywhere, Padme. You belong to me!" Palo growled.

"I've never been yours and I never will be! You will not stop me from saving my little girl. You will not haunt me any longer!" Padme cried fiercely. Anakin touched her shoulder and lent her his powers.

"He's your demon, angel. It's only right you put an end to his torment once and for all," Anakin said.

"Can...can I do that?" she asked.

"Open yourself to the Force. Let my power and love flow through you," he instructed. Padme did as he told her and her eyes became lit with Anakin's raw power. Palo screamed in rage and held his eyes, trying desperately to repel the light.

"I'm not afraid of you anymore!" Padme shouted. He screamed in agony, as his eyes burned with white flames, which soon spread to his entire body.

"You'll never haunt me...again," Padme repeated, as the wind demon dissolved into nothingness and scattered into the harmless breeze.

"He's gone angel...forever this time," Anakin told her. She smiled up at him.

"Let's get out of this icy hell," she said. They trekked to their waiting ship and Artoo took them up and finally jumped to hyperspace.

---

Palpatine seethed angrily, as he felt his last demon be destroyed. He had been livid when he felt the death of his son. He had ordered Tarkin to bring him five Jedi from those he had collected and locked in the prison barracks on his massive ship. He had just finished torturing the five unfortunate beings to death and the bodies were now being disposed of. He estimated he roughly had twenty more Jedi hostages. The rest were hiding on various worlds. The majority being on Yavin IV. Isolder was supposed to have captured or killed them. But he did not put much stock in the prince's abilities. Therefore, he decided he had better see what progress Isolder had made.

"Tarkin...hail Prince Isolder's cruiser," Palpatine ordered.

"Yes My Lord," Tarkin obeyed. When Obi-Wan Kenobi's smug face appeared on the screen, Palpatine nearly launched into another fit of rage.

"What is the meaning of this?!" Palpatine snarled.

"I've taken over this little expedition. This ship is under my command now," Obi-Wan said. Palpatine smirked and then cackled.

"Surely you don't think you and your little band of Rebels stand any chance against my Forces," Palpatine goaded.

"I daresay, your Forces are dwindling. I'm sure you felt Jaren's death in the Force. Anakin is coming for you, Sidious and you know you cannot win," Obi-Wan answered. Palpatine barred his teeth angrily.

"Skywalker will pay for the death of my son. I will crush him and your little Rebellion once and for all!" Palpatine screamed.

"You will try," Obi-Wan responded, as the transmission went dead. Palpatine sat back in his chair, contemplating his next move. Suddenly, he heard the faint tapping of a walking stick on the durasteel floor. Palpatine smirked evilly.

"Correct, Obi-Wan is. Defeated, you will be," Yoda said, as he at last made his presence known. Palpatine laughed and produced his cylindrical weapon from his sleeve.

"You have no idea how long I've waited to put an end to you, my little green friend. You must know that you are no match for me," he said, as he ignited his crimson blade. Yoda tossed his walking stick aside and opened his cloak. His small weapon floated into his hand and an emerald blade sprang forth.

"Defeat you, I may not. But win in the end, the light side will," Yoda stated. Palpatine cackled, as he leapt at Yoda. The small green Master stood ready, as the battle erupted between them.

---

Anakin walked into the med bay several hours later. The cabin was dark and the twins and Chewie were sleeping. They were all exhausted, but he couldn't sleep. Apparently, neither could Padme, as he felt her get up and leave their bed. He followed her and found her in the med bay, watching their youngest, who was in the bacta tank.

"Did I wake you?" she asked.

"No...I couldn't sleep either. I'm too worried about her," he said, as he observed her. Even after all their years of marriage, her beauty still astounded him. Her white silk robe hung from her shoulders, open and her matching nightgown was visible underneath. Her long curls cascaded around her shoulders and down her back. She glided toward him and slid her arms around his waist.

"She's going to be okay, thanks to you," Padme said, as she kissed the spot where his heart would be on his bare chest, as he left his sleep shirt unbuttoned. Her arms slid around his neck, as their lips met in a tender, passionate kiss. They held each other closely, as they stood beside the bacta tank, gazing at their daughter. Suddenly, her eyes opened for a moment and she blinked.

"Anna..." Padme cried in relief. They could not see her smile, because of the mask, but could tell her eyes were smiling.

"We love you..." Padme said, as she and Anakin cried freely. Anna read her mother's lips in understanding and put her hand to the glass, as a way of telling them she loved them too. Anakin and Padme smiled brightly, as Anna's eyes closed and she drifted back to sleep. Anakin and Padme finally decided to try and sleep on the couch across from the bacta tank. As they lay spooned together under a blanket in each other's arms, they finally fell into a much needed slumber...

---

Palpatine howled in rage, as his crimson blade crashed down on Yoda's. The old Jedi struggled with all his might to hold out against the stronger Sith.

"Your feeble skills are no match for me. The years have greatly weakened you, Master Yoda," Palpatine sneered.

"Win this battle, you surely will. But your victory, short-lived, it will be," Yoda said, as her parried another strike.

"You put much faith in your Chosen One. So confident are you that he will not fail?" Palpatine goaded.

"Allow your evil to reign, he will not," Yoda panted.

"If you're so certain, allow me to give you a taste of what nearly killed Skywalker the first time!" Palpatine growled, as red Force lightning erupted from his fingertips. Yoda tried to block it, but it was too

powerful. The small Jedi was thrown violently into a console and then fell face first on the cold floor. His tiny body writhed in pain, as Palpatine poured lightning into him. Unconsciousness swept through him and Palpatine kicked the body against the wall. The tiny Jedi Master was as good as dead, as far as he was concerned. He could feel the Jedi Grand Master slowly dying and decided to let him wallow in defeat and let him suffer, before death took him, instead of granting Yoda a swift death...

---

Jeena and Austin were standing guard outside the cell where they had locked up most of the crew. Jayden and another padawan, Vic Soren, were with them. Every time he moved, Austin grimaced from the pain in his ribs. He had steadfastly refused to be taken to the med bay, but Jeena decided enough was enough.

"All right, that's it. You are coming with me to the med bay," Jeena insisted.

"I'm fine," he responded.

"No, you're not. Those ribs need taped. Med bay...now," she ordered, giving him a "dare to defy me" look.

"Okay...okay...yes ma'am," he mock saluted her.

"Jay, we'll be back soon," she told her brother.

"I bet you twenty credits that they'll end up making out in the med bay," Jayden said.

"You're on," Vic responded.

---

Jeena practically dragged Austin to the med bay and made him sit on a table. She shuffled through the drawers and found the bacta adhesive tape she was looking for. She turned to him and realized

he'd have to take off his shirt. Her cheeks warmed, just a the thought.

"Um...I need to see the affected area," she said. He smirked and started to pull off his tunic gingerly so. Her cheeks reddened furiously, as her eyes drank in the sight of his bare, lean torso, perfectly toned from his years of training. She shook away her inappropriate thoughts and remained stoic, as she carefully taped the bruised area. Austin's eyes never left her, as she did so. Therefore, when she looked up, she found her face only inches from his. Austin leaned in until his lips were pressing gently against hers. Austin's hand cupped her cheek, as he moved his lips passionately over hers. The kiss was sweet and lingered for several moments, before they separated. Jeena was sure her cheeks were stained crimson. Her lips tingled and felt swollen. He stared at her and finally spoke.

"I've wanted to do that for the longest time," he said.

"You...you have?" she asked. It was his turn to blush.

"Yeah...I've sorta had a crush on you since last year when we had Master Fisto's Galactic History course together," he said. Jeena bit her lip playfully.

"How come you never asked me out?" she asked.

"You're kind of intimidating, you know. And Drake Digery told me you wouldn't be interested in me," Austin said.

"Drake is a jerk. Why would you listen to him?" Jeena asked. Austin shrugged.

"He said you were into him," he replied. She curled her lip in disgust.

"Yuck, in his dreams. I'm so going to kick the living Sith out of him the next time I see him," Jeena said, before looking back at him.

"The truth is...I've had a crush on you for a really long time too," she said. He smirked, as she put his tunic over his head and pulled it down.

"Really?" he asked, with a hint of smugness. She narrowed her gaze.

"Don't be egotistical," she warned. He put his hands up in surrender.

"Yes ma'am," he mock saluted.

"And stop saluting me, loser," she teased. He hopped off the table and now Jeena was looking up at him, as he was several inches taller. He smiled down at her and leaned in for another kiss. She closed her eyes, as their lips met and she reveled in all the new things she was feeling.

"Ha, ha, told you Vic. Cough up my money," Jayden said, as they entered. Jeena abruptly broke the kiss. Vic grumbled and slapped the money into Jayden's palm.

"Jay, what are you doing?!" she demanded.

"Relax sis, shift change. You two have duty on the bridge too. We should go or should I tell dad you and Austin are too busy playing hide and seek with your tonsils?" Jayden asked.

"Jay...if you say a word, I'll make your life a living hell," she threatened. He thought for a moment.

"True, you probably would. You can be pretty annoying at times, but it'd almost be worth it just to see dad launch into his "my baby girl" speech in front of everyone," Jayden said.

"Jayden Jinn Kenobi...if you say a word...I'll..." Austin stopped her tirade by placing his hand on her shoulder. He handed credit chips to Jayden in the amount of fifty.

"Thanks! You speak my language. My lips are sealed, carry on," he said, as he and Vic left.

"I hate little brothers. He's an extortionist!" Jeena growled in exasperation. Austin chuckled, as she turned to him. He leaned in, but she was hesitant.

"We should get to the bridge," she said.

"In a minute. My ribs still hurt," he replied, as he captured her lips in his own. They separated a few moments later and reached the bridge. They were instructed to strap in, as they dropped out of hyperspace over Naboo. Having been alerted to the hijacked state of Prince Isolder's ship, the Hapan brigade began firing on the ship. It lurched violently and Isolder was stunned.

"They know I'm on this ship," he said.

"Are you that thick?" Jeena snapped. He looked insulted.

"My daughter is right. Once you gave Palpatine access to your army, how long did you think it would take him to mind trick them all into pledging their loyalty to him. He did it to thousands in the Senate years ago. Your army is no different," Obi-Wan said. The ship lurched violently again.

"Dad...we can't take too many more hits like that," Jeena cried.

"Okay, we'll never get this ship on the ground. We'll have to split into pairs and use the escape pods. Hopefully, they will keep their attention on the bigger target. Everyone to the evacuation bay!" Obi-Wan called.

"What about my men?" Isolder asked.

"You idiot! Did you not hear him? They are not loyal to you any longer!" Kira yelled. They arrived in the evacuation bay. Shaak Ti took Isolder with her and she was the first to be ejected. The pods

were small enough that the slow battle ships could not lock onto them with their weapons. The other Jedi were ejected in pairs and finally it was Aayla and Kit's turn. After that, Kira and Jayden prepared to eject. Lea hugged and kissed her son.

"I'll be fine mom," he rolled his eyes. Next, Jeena hugged her parents, as she prepared to eject with Austin.

"Padawan Martin," Obi-Wan called.

"Yes Master?" he answered.

"Look after her for me," Obi-Wan said.

"I will sir," he replied. Lea and Obi-Wan were the last ones to eject. Moments later, Isolder's cruiser exploded after another blast. The small pods sailed to Naboo's surface, landing in various places. Each team's objective was to make their way to the palace up on landing...

# Quick Detour to Tatooine

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars.

AN: Here's chapter 22! Thanks for all the great reviews everyone!

Never Gone III

Chapter 22: Quick Detour to Tatooine

Obi-Wan ducked and went back inside the cave they were calling home at the moment. It was in the Lake Country and hidden by the massive waterfalls. Only half their group had managed to regroup together since their landing two days ago. He feared some of the others had been captured or worse. Theed was crawling with Hapan patrols and Obi-Wan deduced that Palpatine increased patrols, because of their presence. He had to find a way to contact Anakin and let him know that it was likely Palpatine would have his ship destroyed the moment it entered Coruscanti space. Right now, his daughter, Austin, and Whie were all trying to create a comm signal on one of the escape pod's control panels.

"Any luck?" Obi-Wan asked, as his daughter dug her fingers through the mess of wires.

"We think we have it strong enough to send a signal to the *Sapphire Angel* ," Jeena said.

"I still don't understand though. Won't Palpatine be able to sense Master Skywalker no matter what ship he's on?" Austin asked.

"Palpatine thinks so, but Anakin has the ability to mask his presence and of those around him. He's already doing this. They are probably getting close to mid rim by now and yet I still cannot sense him," Obi-Wan replied.

"That gives Anakin the element of surprise. But where is he going to get another ship, especially one that can get by Hapan patrols?" Whie asked.

"A freight ship of course," Obi-Wan smiled mysteriously.

"But freight ships are slow and bulky. They'll need a fast ship when it comes time to escape. Palpatine's Super Star Destroyer is orbiting Coruscant now, just waiting for Anakin to show up," Aayla said.

"Yes, well, I know of a freight ship that is as fast as the *Sapphire Angel* and can hide people in its floor compartments, which don't usually register on a normal scanner," Obi-Wan said.

"The Millennium Falcon," Kit said, with a smile.

"But...that ship belongs to Han Solo. He is being imprisoned by Jabba the Hutt is he not?" Shaak Ti asked.

"Yes, but not for long," Obi-Wan replied.

"We're ready to send the transmission," Austin said.

"Good," Obi-Wan replied, as their signal began hailing the *Sapphire Angel* .

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Anna sat on the edge of the bed, as her mother brushed her long blonde hair. She'd been out of the bacta tank for almost two days now and spent the previous day in bed. Now, she was starting to feel well enough to move around.

"Are you sure you're feeling well enough to be out of bed, sweetheart?" Padme asked apprehensively. Anna nodded.

"I'm feeling almost normal," she replied.

"Okay, but take it easy," Padme told her. Anna hopped off the bed, just as her father walked in.

"Well, it looks like you're doing much better, princess," he said, as he hugged her tightly.

"I'm feeling a lot better, daddy," she told him.

"Good. You had us worried there for a while, little one," he replied. Anna smiled and exited the med bay to join her siblings. Padme sighed, as he enveloped her in his arms and hugged her tightly.

"What is our position?" Padme asked.

"We're nearing the mid-rim. I'm estimating about another six hours until we reach Coruscant," he said.

"I don't like this, Ani. We have no idea what we're walking into," she said.

"I don't like it either. But according to the Holonet, patrols on Naboo and Alderaan are just as steep. We just have to hope to make it past them and onto Palpatine's Super Star Destroyer. I still don't really like the idea of taking all of you with me," Padme stopped him.

"We're all in this together, Ani. We're going to have to make this a team effort if we're going to have any chance," she replied.

I know, but I still don't like it," he replied. She smiled and kissed him softly. Anakin tilted his head and drew her into a deep, passionate embrace that lasted several moments. They held each other in silence, until Luke came running in.

"Dad, there's an encrypted transmission coming in over the comm," he exclaimed.

"It might be Obi-Wan. Have Artoo transfer it to the comm in the living area," Anakin said, as he took Padme's hand and led her there, where they gathered with their children. The transmission had no visual and came with just audio

*"Hello...Anakin, Anakin, do you copy? This is Obi-Wan Kenobi* ,"

"We're here Obi-Wan. What's going on?" Anakin answered.

*"Anakin, you must not go to Coruscant in the Sapphire Angel. Palpatine has ordered that your ship be fired on if it is seen in any sector,"* Obi-Wan said.

"That coward," Anakin growled.

*"I agree. But I have an idea. I think you should go to Tatooine first. The Falcon would be able to slip through as a supply ship we think,"* Obi-Wan said.

"But even if it could, we'd still need clearance codes," Anakin replied.

*"It just so happens that we've captured Prince Isolder. We can only hope they haven't got around to changing the codes in the last few days,"* Obi-Wan said. Anakin smiled.

"Excellent. Relay the codes to Artoo. I'll have him change course immediately. We'll go after Han first," Anakin said, not missing the smile that appeared on Leia's face.

*"Yes, I'm sure Captain Solo might be a little upset if he misses out on all the fun,"* Obi-Wan replied.

"Are you and the others safe?" Anakin asked.

*"For now. We're hiding out on Naboo. Theed is crawling with patrols, but we're formulating a plan to infiltrate the city,"* Obi-Wan said.

"Obi-Wan, what about the Gungans? I'm sure they can help," Padme said.

*"I'm sorry to tell you this, Padme, but most of the Gungans were killed in the initial troop invasion...including Jar Jar. There is only a handful left and they have retreated to their habitat in the ocean,"* Obi-Wan said gravely. Padme was stunned and she felt her kids gather around her.

"Thanks Obi-Wan. Be careful and stay safe...all of you," Anakin said.

*"And you and your family as well Anakin. We have all the confidence in the galaxy that you will put an end to Palpatine's tyranny,"* Obi-Wan said. Anakin nodded.

"You can count on it. May the Force be with you all," Anakin said.

*"And you and yours, brother,"* Obi-Wan replied, as the transmission went dead. Anakin stood up and turned to his family.

"I'll have Artoo change course. Jabba's palace is our first stop," he announced. His wife and children nodded. Chewie rawled and they began planning a course of action...

---

"Boy...she sure is a nice ship, Ani," Watto complimented him, as he flapped his wings.

"Yes she is. I can trust you to hold her here for us for a few days, right?" Anakin asked.

"Sure, sure," Watto replied. Anakin pointed his finger at the old Toydarian.

"I mean it Watto. No selling her and no stripping her for parts," Anakin warned. Watto waved him off.

"Sure, sure Ani. Besides, you gave me a hefty down payment for the space," Watto said, as he jingled the small sack full of Tatooinian currency in quite a large sum.

"You know...it isn't safe to go to Jabba's palace. Not a good place to take beautiful girls either. You know what Jabba does with human females," Watto warned.

"You don't have to worry, Watto, we'll be fine. Jabba is the one that needs to be careful and he won't be laying a slimy tentacle on any of

my girls," Anakin replied.

"Well...all right. You a be careful," Watto said.

"Always. Thanks Watto. We'll be back for the ship in a few days," Anakin said, as he and his family set off through Mos Espa. They rented a speeder and began the journey to Mos Eisley...and Jabba's palace...

---

A couple hours later, the Skywalker family arrived on the outskirts of Jabba's palace.

"So...what's the plan? How are we going to get in?" Luke asked.

"We're going to walk right in the front door," Anakin replied, as he offered his arm to Padme. She took it and their three children flanked them.

"But daddy, won't Jabba try to capture us?" Anna asked.

"Oh...I'm sure he will. But try would be the operative word, sweetheart," he replied. Anakin knocked loudly on the door. A security eye popped out and spoke some unintelligible droid language.

"We're here to see Jabba. Open the door," Anakin requested. It babbled and then clamored back inside. The door did not open and Anakin knocked again.

"Open the door..." Anakin demanded. The droid probe slid out again and babbled incoherently. Anakin ignited his blade. He swiped through the probe's arm and destroyed the annoying device. A few moments later, the large, durasteel blast door rose slowly. Two guards were there, pointing their spears at the intruders. Anakin raised his hand and the two guards fell to the ground, with a simple sleep suggestion from the Jedi Master. The Skywalker family trudged

farther into the corridor and came upon a very pale white Twi'lek male.

"Master Jabba does not wish to have any visitors. Leave immediately..." the Twi'lek said in a raspy voice.

"I have business to take care of with Jabba. Surely he can see us for just a few moments," Anakin said. The Twi'lek, Bib Fortuna, as he was known, looked confused for a moment.

"You will take us to Jabba now," Anakin ordered.

"I will take you to Jabba now," Bib Fortuna parroted, as he led them to the throne room. They entered the Throne room and drew a lot of attention from the bounty hunters that were gathered around the room.

"I must speak to Jabba now," Anakin told Bib Fortuna. The Twi'lek nodded and approached his Master, who was dozing.

"Master Jabba," he spoke closely to the giant worm.

*"Waaa..."* Jabba growled, as his large eyes popped open.

"Master Jabba...you have visitors," Bib Fortuna told him.

*"I told you not to disturb me!"* Jabba growled in fluent Huttese, which Anakin understood clearly.

"I must be allowed to speak with him," Anakin said.

"Master...he must be allowed to speak with you," Bib Fortuna said. Jabba growled.

*"Fool...he's using a Jedi mind trick on you!"* Jabba spat.

"I'm Jedi Knight Anakin Skywalker and I'm here to pay Han Solo's debt in exchange for his release," Anakin stated. The gangster let out a creepy laugh, signaling his minions that it was okay to laugh as

well. Jabba's pet, a strange little pointy eared creature let out a high pitched, annoying laugh.

"It's too late for Solo. Besides...I like my new wall decoration right where it is," Jabba pointed to the far wall where Han's carbonite slab hung. Leia let out a startled gasp.

"I'll pay twice the amount of Han's debt for his release," Anakin offered.

*"Money I have. Perhaps you'd like to trade. You can have Solo in exchange for...one of them,"* Jabba pointed, indicating his wife and daughters.

"You wish, you filthy slug," Padme heard her husband mumble.

"Triple the amount Solo owes you. And that's...my final offer. It would be in your best interest and well being to take it," Anakin responded. Jabba let out another creepy laugh.

*"You don't scare me...Jedi Poodoo..."* Jabba laughed.

"Then you are a fool. Since you will not accept my most generous offer. I'm afraid I'll have to forcibly take what I want. This is your last chance to save your pathetic skin, Jabba. What will it be?" Anakin asked. Jabba was angry now and yelled to his bounty hunters to seize them.

"I guess he's chosen aggressive negotiations," Padme said.

"Too bad for him," Anakin replied. They both smirked at each other. Their children ignited their sapphire blades, Padme drew her blaster, and Anakin ignited his twin silver sabers he'd constructed back during his training days with Obi-Wan.

"This is where the fun begins," Anakin told them. The guards and the bounty hunters alike advanced on the five Skywalker's and the Wookie. They were vastly outnumbered, for Jabba had his own

miniature army, but this did not worry Anakin, his family, or Chewie in the slightest. The fighting broke out and the chamber became filled with mass chaos. Leia swiped a couple guards out of her way and Chewie barreled through a few more. They reached the far wall and Leia pressed a button on the side panel. The slab of carbonite lowered to the floor and she turned up the temperature dials on the panel in order to melt the carbonite. The carbonite turned red, as it slowly melted. Chewie caught Han before he could fall to the floor and laid his shaking form on the floor. Leia knelt beside him. She touched his face and he moved his head around frantically, trying to figure out why he could not see.

"Shh...Han, it's me," Leia whispered.

"Leia..." he choked in relief. She leaned over him and he felt a few of her tears on his face.

"I've missed you so much..." she cried.

"Leia..." he repeated, as their lips crashed together in a soul searing kiss.

"Why can't I see?" he asked.

"Hibernation sickness. Your vision will return soon," she said. Chewie rawled and patted Han affectionately.

"I missed you too pal. What's all that racket?" he asked.

"Um...that would be my parents and siblings aggressively negotiating your release," Leia said.

"Chewie, help me get him up," Leia said. Together, they helped Han stand and he leaned on them.

"Your parents? You mean...Anakin's here? He woke up?" Han asked.

"Yes, a lot has happened in the last couple weeks. You've got some catching up to do, but there will be time for that later," Leia said. Han

heard some unfortunate being cry out in pain and Leia watched, as he hit the wall beside them.

"Aggressive negotiations, huh?" Han asked. Leia smirked.

"It's the Skywalker way. Come on," Leia said, as she and Chewie started moving him toward the exit.

Jabba's tail was flailing wildly and he was yelling angrily, as his bounty hunters and guards were cut down. He angrily slammed his fist down on a button and a floor panel opened. He hoped to get the intruders to fall in, so he could feed them to the Rancor. He laughed, as he watched Greedo, one of his best, get a good kick on Anna's stomach. She stumbled back near the trap and started to fall.

"Anna!" Luke cried, as he tried to finish the guard he was fighting to get to her. Anakin swiped through two guards and caught his daughter, before she could fall. Jabba stopped laughing and almost choked in fear, as he watched a beam of light erupt from the Jedi's palm and spear Greedo through the heart. Padme successfully hit four more guards with her blaster, but fell forward when Filtch hit her in the back. The seven foot tall, burly bounty hunter confiscated her weapon and hauled her to her feet. She fought and struggled, as he dragged her to Jabba. The slug laughed evilly, as he eyed the prize his servant had brought him.

*"You have Solo now, Jedi, and I have something precious to you now. A fair trade, I think,"* Jabba said, as his disgusting tongue poked out of his huge mouth. Padme turned away in repulsion, as the disgusting thing came toward her.

"Let her go, you slimy slug...that is, if you want to live," Anakin threatened. Jabba laughed.

*"As long as I hold her prisoner...you will not harm me, lest you wish for me to throw her to the Rancor!"* Jabba growled. His platform slid closer to the floor opening and Padme cried out, as the bounty

hunter dangled her over the opening. Jabba laughed, as Anakin gritted his teeth, seething at the gangster.

"Luke...get your sisters and Han to the speeder. We'll be right behind you. The droids are outside the door. Don't forget them either," Anakin ordered. Luke obeyed and cut down two more guards, leaving only Bib Fortuna in their way. He cried out, as Luke cut him down and led them to the exit.

"This is your last chance, Jabba. Tell your bounty hunter to carefully pull her away from there...or die. It's your choice," Anakin said.

*"Put down your weapons...or she's the Rancor's dinner,"* Jabba threatened.

"Wrong choice, slime ball," Anakin replied, as he leapt onto Jabba's platform. The filthy worm screamed in terror, as Anakin scissored his sabers through Jabba's thick, fat neck. It was disgusting and Anakin quickly stepped back, as he oozed blood and slime. He heard Padme scream and he turned to her, seeing that she was hanging onto the edge. If she let go, she'd fall into the Rancor's den.

"Ani...I'm slipping," she screamed. The bounty hunter laughed evilly, but his laugh quickly changed to a scream of pain and horror, as Anakin sliced his arm off, which also effectively disarmed him as well. Anakin grabbed Padme's arms and pulled her up. She breathed a sigh of relief, as her husband held her close.

"You okay?" he asked. She smiled.

"I'm fine...thanks to you," she replied. Filtch angrily launched toward them, which would be the death of him. Anakin used a Force push and sent him stumbling back. He screamed, as he fell into the Rancor pit. Anakin and Padme ran out of the room, failing to hear the bounty hunter's final scream, before he was devoured by the beast...

The speeder sped away from the palace, as Anakin and Padme had both tossed a thermal detonator inside, as they left. The palace exploded, as their vehicle sped safely toward Mos Eisley space port. Once they arrived, they boarded the Millennium Falcon and left Tatooine. They quickly made the jump to hyperspace and in just a little over seven hours, they would arrive over Coruscant. There, they would be thrust into the final battle that would determine the future of the galaxy...and the fate of not only the Jedi, but their whole family...

# Final Confrontation

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars.

AN: Here's chapter 23! Thanks for all the great reviews! Enjoy!

Never Gone III

Chapter 23: Final Confrontation

Han sat in the co-pilot seat, as Anakin made the calculations and jumped them to hyperspace.

"How are your eyes?" Anakin asked.

"Well, instead of a big dark blur, it's now just a blur with some light spots. I suppose that means they're getting better," Han replied.

"Thanks for comin' after me, by the way," Han mentioned.

"When I told you all those years ago that I'd always be here when you needed me, I wasn't kidding," Anakin said. Han was silent, as Anakin continued.

"Why didn't you just come to me, Han? I would have paid your debt. Padme and I care about you and had we known Jabba was putting a price on your head, we would have done anything we could to protect you," Anakin said.

"It was my mess. I made it and I needed to clean it up. I didn't want to drag you into it," Han said.

"And that's the only reason?" Anakin asked. Han sighed.

"Look, I screwed up royally and I didn't want to disappoint you. I messed up the good job you got me and when I tried to fix it, I got in deep with Jabba," Han laughed bitterly.

"I'm a screw up, just like my old man always said," Han said.

"You are not a screw up," Anakin said sternly, then softened his tone.

"Did you really think that Padme and I would love you any less, just because you made some mistakes? A few bad choices?" Anakin asked.

"I just...you both were so good to me. And I felt like I spat on all that when I got kicked out of the Navy. I just didn't want you to be disappointed in me. I couldn't handle letting down another person," Han said, as he felt a hand on his shoulder.

"We love you like a son, Han. There's nothing you could do that would change that," he recognized the voice as Padme's.

"She's right, Han. You're part of this family. You can always come to us with your problems or for advice," Anakin said.

"Thanks and sorry for being such a nerfherder," Han said.

"No thanks necessary, sweetheart. That's what parents are for. They reign in their kids when they get into trouble and always have time for them, no matter how busy they are," Padme said.

"She's right, no thanks necessary. I've had a bone to pick with Jabba for a long time. I'd be lying if I said I didn't enjoy that little fiasco," Anakin said.

"Yeah...too bad I couldn't see anything. I would have enjoyed watching you slice up that slimy ringworm filth," Han said.

"He can tell you all about the gory details later. Right now, there is a very special girl waiting in back for you. How are your eyes?" Padme asked.

"I can see the outlines of your faces now, so I think they're clearing," he said.

"Good...then this should help now. Hold still," Padme said, as she shined a small light stimulating tool in his right eye.

"Ow!" he clenched it shut. He yelped again, as she did the other.

"Stang...that hurt," Han complained.

"Open your eyes," Padme requested. He did so, blinking rapidly several times and was surprised to find clear vision.

"Hey...I can see!" he exclaimed.

"Of course you can. I do know what I am doing, you know," she told him. Han smiled and stood up.

"Thanks mom," he said. She hugged him.

"You better call me mom. Now go," she said. Han walked out of the cockpit, in search of the woman he loved. Padme smirked and settled herself across her husband's lap. She knew their was a huge battle ahead of them, but she couldn't help but feel ecstatic that they were all together again.

"And we'll stay together this time, angel. Palpatine won't win," Anakin said, knowing what she was thinking.

"I know. I have no doubt that you'll defeat him and we'll be there with you every step of the way," she replied. He smiled.

"I wouldn't have it any other way," he said. She smirked.

"Good. Now that's settled, so shut up and kiss me already," she ordered.

"You're so bossy," he complained in a teasing tone.

"And you love it when I boss you around," she replied.

"I have to admit that I do," he confessed.

"Then get busy and give me what I want," she demanded in a playful tone.

"Yes Milady," he replied obediently. Padme closed her eyes, as he leaned in. He wore a devilish smirk, as he suddenly started tickling her. She yelped in surprise and laughed, as he tickled her sides.

"Ani...stop!" she pleaded. He smirked and pulled her close.

"You mean that's not what you wanted? I'm terribly sorry Milady, do forgive me," he teased. She smirked at him.

"Perhaps I need to demonstrate what I desire?" she asked.

"Oh, by all means," he replied, as her lips captured his.

"Oh, you mean you want this," he said, as he pressed his lips to hers again.

"And maybe this," he whispered, as his lips traveled down her neck.

"You would be correct. Don't stop," she said breathlessly.

"Never Milady," he replied, as he kissed her passionately again and she melted into his arms...

---

Han wandered into the corridors of the Falcon and into the Captain's quarters.

"Leia...your sister said you were back here," he called, as he stepped in. He spotted her by the vanity and his breath caught in his throat. She was freshly showered, wrapped in a thin cloth robe that belonged to him and her hair was damp, cascading down her back. She gazed at him longingly and he closed the distance between them. Leia's arms flew around his neck, as he took her petite form in his arms and kissed her like a starved man. Leia tangled her fingers in his hair, as he plundered her mouth, devouring her sweet taste.

"Han..." Leia whispered breathlessly, as his lips assaulted her neck. Her hands tugged at his tunic and he lifted his arms, so she could pull it over his head. Her hands skated over his bare chest, as he continued kissing her deeply and passionately. Han's hands rested on the cord of her robe, when he broke the kiss to look into her eyes.

"Leia...Isolder didn't...hurt you, did he?" Han asked.

"He didn't get the chance to hurt me the way you're thinking," she said. He sighed in relief.

"He didn't rape me, but we can talk about all that later. Right now...I need you," she told him. Their kissing and caressing resumed, as Han's hands returned to the cord on her robe. He undid it and parted the fabric, letting it fall to the floor in a puddle at her feet. He took her in his arms and kissed her again, as they stumbled to the bed. And everything else, except their love, was forgotten for the moment...

---

A few hours later, they were all relaxing in the cabin area, the impending battle looming over their heads. Artoo and Chewy were playing an odd game that consisted of a checkered game board and holographic creatures that moved about in attempt to defeat the other. Chewy rawled angrily, as Artoo made a move that caused him to lose.

"It's a fair move," Threepio told him. Chewy rawled in complaint again.

"Wookies don't like to lose," Han mentioned.

"Yelling about it won't help. No one ever cares if a droid loses," Threepio said. Han smirked.

"That's because droids don't usually pull people's arms out of their sockets when they lose. Wookies have been known to do that," Han replied. Threepio stared at him blankly.

"I see your point. Artoo, let the Wookie win," Threepio suggested. Artoo emitted an electronic raspberry at Threepio and continued playing. Padme walked in with a plate of sandwiches and set it down on a table.

"I thought it would be a good idea if we went over the plan one more time and had something to eat," she said.

"Thanks angel, you read my mind," Anakin said, as he grabbed a plate and a sandwich.

"Well, I could hear your stomach growling from the cockpit earlier. It kind of tipped me off that you just might be hungry. But then again, you always are," she joked, as she kissed his cheek.

"Okay, so are you sure these codes will work? What if they changed them after Prince pretty pants got captured by Obi-Wan?" Han asked.

"Well...we're kind of taking a big risk. I'm hoping they've had more to worry about though in the last few days then that. They have been dealing with pockets of resistance on all the core planets, especially Naboo," Anakin replied, as he took another bite of his sandwich.

"What do we do if they have changed the codes?" Leia asked. Han smirked.

"Then we wing it and hope we make it onto Emperor Asshole's ship," Han said.

"That's the plan," Anakin replied. Leia rolled her eyes.

"Men," she mumbled.

"For now, we're going with best case scenario. Han and Chewy are pilots delivering supplies to the Military base on Coruscant. They'll have to inspect the supplies before they can be allowed on the planet and they'll pull the ship in. We'll be hiding in the hidden floor

compartments and we make sure whoever comes up to do the inspection doesn't leave. Then, while Luke and I go after Palpatine, the rest of you will find any Jedi prisoners and smuggle them back to the Falcon," Anakin said.

"It's that part of the plan I'm worried about. Palpatine won't go down easily," Padme said.

"I know, but neither will we. I promise everything will work out as it should," Anakin told her. She nodded and rested her head on his shoulder, while munching on her own sandwich. The last time he'd rushed off into battle with Palpatine, she'd nearly lost him. The two months he'd been lying in a coma had been the worst, most agonizing months of her life. But she had to remind herself that this time he was prepared. Last time, Palpatine and his cowardly son had surprise attacked him before he could put up a good defense.

*"This time is different,"* she told herself, but that did not ease her worry. Of all the times she'd watched him run headlong into battle or off on some insanely dangerous mission, it never got easier. And she supposed it never would. She knew that she had to simply trust in their love and the Force. Things would be set right.

*"But how many more will die before things are right again?"* she wondered silently. Sensing her anxiety, Anakin's arm slid around her waist and squeezed her hip comfortingly. They all sat munching on their sandwiches in silence. The plan was simple and direct; just the way Anakin liked it. Though, he knew once they were on Palpatine's ship, simple was not going to be a word used to describe the situation...

---

The Naboo countryside was under attack once again. Hapan soldiers swarmed around them. They had been discovered. Obi-Wan was the last to have his wrists shackled. Some had managed to flee and hide, but Obi-Wan, Lea, Jeena, Jayden, Austin, Isolder, and Kira had all been captured. Obi-Wan saw a familiar face leading the troops and glared at him, as he approached.

"Well, if it isn't Captain Panaka, Naboo's most notorious traitor. I don't even need three guesses as to who freed you from Kessel," Obi-Wan spat. Panaka snarled and punched Obi-Wan in the jaw. He recoiled, as his head was thrown to the side and Lea yelped in fear.

"I spent fifteen years in that fucking slime infested hell hole, because of you and Skywalker. Its' time for a little payback. I was lucky I even survived that place. Jamillla and Severus weren't so lucky," Panaka said.

"Pity. If I try really hard, I might be able to shed a tear," Obi-Wan replied, with his usual sarcasm. It earned him another belt across the mouth, bloodying his lip.

"Take them to the transport. They're going to visit the Emperor," Panaka ordered. They were loaded onto the transport and it departed for Coruscant right away.

---

Sever hours after leaving Tatooine, they were nearing Coruscanti space. Anakin sat in the co-pilot chair, as Han took control.

"Well...here we go. Sure hope these codes work...or, well, let's just say it's been nice knowin' you," Han said,

"It'll work," Anakin assured him. Han nodded and brought them out of hyperspace. Before them was a massive ship, in which Palpatine called a Super Star Destroyer. Behind it was the planet of Coruscant.

"Stang...that sucker is massive!" Han exclaimed.

"I know...and it's as powerful as the Death Star. That's why it must be destroyed," Anakin said.

"No doubt. Cross your fingers that this works," Han said, as he moved closer to the ship.

"Unidentified vessel...please identify and state your business immediately!" a voice came over the comm.

"Uh...this is Captain...Scott. I'm delivering supplies to the military base on Coruscant," Han said.

"How many passengers aboard?" the Officer asked.

"Just me and my co-pilot," Han answered.

"All ship cargo must be inspected, before it is allowed on the planet. Stand by and prepare for docking," the Officer said.

"They bought it. You better get to those compartments," Han said. Anakin nodded, as the massive ship's tractor beam pulled them in to the nearest docking bay. The Millennium Falcon was docked and the ramp dropped. Two Hapan soldiers carried a scanning kit up the ramp and two Officers followed.

"Your cargo and ship will be scanned now. I must ask that you stay where you are," he said sternly.

"Sure thing," Han agreed. Suddenly the two Officers gripped their throats, as they suddenly couldn't breathe. They fell dead to the floor and the two Hapan soldiers looked at Han.

"What did you do?" one demanded to know. Han shrugged.

"Nothin'. Do these guys fall asleep on the job all the time?" Han joked.

"We need to radio for help," the other soldier said. Suddenly, a snap hiss was heard and the two soldiers were silenced permanently with two quick, clean thrusts from Anakin's light saber. The rest of the Skywalker family climbed out of the compartments and the dead bodies were stuffed in them for now.

"Okay, Luke, you're with me. The rest of you see what prisoners you can find," Anakin said.

"Be careful!" Padme called. Anakin kissed her quickly.

"We will," he responded, as he and Luke went off in search of Palpatine.

Han led Leia, Anna, and Padme out of the docking bay and into one of the ship's corridors, while Chewie brought up the rear.

"Mom...where do you think the prison barracks are?" Anna asked.

"It's hard to say sweetie. But my guess would be more toward the rear of the ship and probably on one of the middle levels," Padme suggested.

"Then we need to go this way," Han motioned, as he led them down a corridor to the right. As they rounded a corner, several Hapan soldiers on patrol intercepted them.

"Freeze! Drop your weapons and put your hands up!" the lead Officer shouted. Han started to put his hands up, as Leia and Anna ignited their blades. They split the defenses, each taking down the two on either side, while Padme fired on the lead Officer, hitting him between the eyes. Several more Officers descended on them, firing. Leia and Anna blocked what they could, sending some of the blasts back at the soldiers. Han, Padme, and Chewie fired their blasters rapidly and Chewie rawled angrily, using his brute strength against the men, who were frightened of him. The soldiers dropped around them and finally only one remained. In a desperate attempt to make them surrender, the Lieutenant grabbed Padme from behind and placed his arm around her neck.

"Drop your weapons...or she dies!" he shouted. Leia and Anna extinguished their blades, while Han and Chewie lowered their blasters.

"Drop them!" he screamed, with a wild, frightened look in his eye.

"You have no idea who you're dealing with," Padme told him.

"Silence! I'm taking you to the Emperor. My men will be along to take care of your friends," he said.

"Not today," Padme replied, as she sunk her teeth into his arm. He yelled in pain, as she twisted his arm around. He screamed, as she reversed their positions, wrapping her arms around his neck. She squeezed and twisted her arms there was a sickening crack and Padme let the body fall to the ground. Han's eyes were side in disbelief, as he watched Padme snap a man's neck, who was at least twice her size.

"I'm guessing Anakin taught her that," he said.

"Daddy taught all of us. He's a firm believer in knowing how to defend yourself without a weapon. He did grow up on Tatooine, you know," she reminded him. He nodded.

"You can really do that?" he asked. She rolled her eyes.

"If I have to. I may be a Senator, but I'm also a Jedi," she replied.

"Come on, let's get to the lift," Padme said, leading the way, as she raised her comlink to her lips.

"Artoo...what level is the detention block on?" Padme asked, as they arrived at the lift. It took Artoo a few moments to tap into the ship's system. She heard him whirl and beep and plucked the translator from her belt.

"Level Seventeen," Padme said, as they filled into the lift and hit floor seventeen as their destination.

The Soldiers shoved Obi-Wan onto the bridge, as his hands were shackled behind his back. The Commander kicked Yoda's small body forward as well, sending him sprawling to the ground.

"Master Yoda," Obi-Wan said, concern rising in his voice. He had never seen the Jedi Grand Master so frail and weak. Obi-Wan heard

an evil cackle and looked up to find Palpatine's ugly face staring at them.

"Well, well, Master Yoda. Still stubbornly clinging to life I see and after such an embarrassing defeat at my hand," Palpatine goaded. His yellow eyes shifted to Obi-Wan.

"And Master Kenobi, how good to see you again as well. When Anakin learns of your untimely death...he'll come running. Too bad he'll be destroyed before he can get on this ship," Palpatine said in mock regret.

"Coward! You want him destroyed before you have to face him, because you know the outcome of a battle with him will not end in your favor," Obi-Wan goaded. Palpatine snarled and hurled red Force lightning at Kenobi. The attack wrenched a cry of agony from the Jedi Master and dropped him to his knees.

"Worthless Jedi scum," Palpatine spat.

"General Tarkin...fetch Kenobi's wife. Make sure his brats know this will be the last they see of their mother," Palpatine said.

"NO!" Obi-Wan cried hoarsely, as he pulled himself to his feet. Palpatine smirked evilly.

"Don't worry, Master Kenobi. I fully intend to make you watched me kill her, before you join her as well," Palpatine cackled evilly, as Tarkin left on the lift. At the same time, the other lift opened, revealing two men Palpatine hoped would never make it onto the ship. He was baffled as to how he had not even sensed him until now. And he could not hide the shock marring his face, as his ultimate enemy stepped off the lift with his son. Anakin smirked, as Palpatine seethed in rage.

"Your reign is at an end, Emperor. The Sith legacy is dead and you're all that remains. I'm here to rectify that and put an end to the Sith Order forever," Anakin said, as he ignited his silver blades. Luke

followed suit, igniting his own sapphire blade. Palpatine sneered at him and ignited his crimson blade.

"I put you in a coma the last time we fought. This time...I'll be sure to finish the job," Palpatine sneered. Luke and Anakin sunk into fighting stance, as the Sith Lord launched into a spiral spin, coming at them with a vicious kick. Father and son stood ready to repel his attack...

# Duel of the Fates

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars.

AN: Here's chapter 24! We're in the final stretch! Thanks to all my reviews. You guys are the best!

Never Gone III

Chapter 24: Duel of the Fates

As they exited the lift, shots were fired at them again and they dodged to take cover where they could.

"Damn...they're everywhere," Han said.

"If we're not careful, they'll corner us," Anna said.

"Can any of you sense where they are? There's a lot of prison cells on this level," Han said. Leia closed her eyes and concentrated.

"Down the right corridor...near the center," Leia said.

"Good...you free them and I'll create a diversion," Han said.

"Be careful," Leia pleaded. He smirked.

"Hey...it's me," he replied, as he leapt out and shot two soldiers, before he went barreling down the winding central corridor, screaming like a maniac. All attention was turned to him and the others slipped down the right corridor. Unfortunately, Han ran straight into the soldiers barracks and was soon running back in the direction he came, all the while trying to shoot at the advancing soldiers behind him. Padme, her daughters, and Chewie followed Leia's instruction and found the right cell. Padme blasted the lock and the door slid open.

"Everyone out," she called. The Jedi prisoners filed out quickly, the last of them being, Austin, Jeena, Jayden, Kira, and Lea. Padme hugged her cousin tightly and then hugged Kira as well.

"Where's Luke?" she asked brokenly.

"He's with Anakin. He'll be all right though, sweetie. I'm so sorry about Bail. He was one of my best friends," Padme told her, as she pulled the girl into a hug.

"As for you, Prince Isolder, when all this is over, I will see to it that you are held responsible for Bail's death," Padme said, glaring at him.

"We need to move!" Han called, as he came sprinting toward them.

"We can't go that way, so let's try this way," Leia said, as they all began sprinting toward the blast door at the end of the corridor. They opened the door and pressed the button to extend the bridge. The prisoner's began filing across. They heard blaster shots hit the door behind them. Jayden and Lea were the last ones across the bridge, before it was collapsed, trapping Padme, Leia, Han, Anna, and Kira.

"Keep going! Get everyone to the Falcon!" Padme called to Jeena and Austin, counting on them to lead the way. Behind them the door opened partway.

"They're coming through," Han said.

"Be ready...and take down, as many as you can," Padme said. The door opened and the fight began. They took down the soldiers in their way. They ran back to the center corridor and headed for the lift. The lift opened and they waited, as they dodged laser blasts from their oncoming foes. Han managed to get Chewie, Leia, Anna, and Kira in the lift. But Padme was trapped behind the corner by persistent soldiers, who kept dodging her blaster bolts.

"Go on without me!" Padme called.

"No way...we aren't leaving you mom!" Anna cried. More soldiers swarmed toward the lift.

"Han, get my daughters to safety! I'll be fine!" Padme called.

"Damn it!" Han swore, as he had no choice, but to activate the lift, leaving Padme behind. She fired a few more shots and then ran down the left corridor, hoping to hide until the soldiers gave up on finding her. She stopped to catch her breath for a moment, unaware of the cell opening behind her. Her scream was muffled, as her assailant grabbed her from behind and covered her mouth. He pried her weapon from her and yanked her into the cell, as the door slid shut...

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Palpatine roared maniacally, as he brought his saber down on Anakin and Luke. They stared at each other in the deadlock. Their muscles burned in protest, but neither was willing to give an inch.

"You killed my son...and I assure you, I shall take yours from you as well," Palpatine sneered.

"No...you're the only one that will die today, Sidious. Your son was a monster, just like you and intended to murder my family. He paid for it and so will you," Anakin retorted. Palpatine laughed evilly.

"We shall see..." Palpatine countered, as he used a Force push to shove Anakin against the wall. The Sith Lord cackled evilly, turning his full attention to Luke. Luke did his best to keep up, as the Sith Lord slashed at him with a vengeance.

"How does it feel to know that you're about to die...boy," Palpatine sneered. Luke remained silent and kept fighting, but Palpatine could see the uncertainty in his eyes, as well as the poorly veiled fear.

"Don't worry my boy...I'll grant you a quick death. It will only hurt for a moment," Palpatine goaded. Anakin leapt back into the battle, taking some of the pressure off Luke's blade.

"Leave my son alone," Anakin growled.

"But he must pay for your transgressions," Palpatine said, as he split their defenses and kicked Luke on his back. He prepared to spear the young Jedi through the chest. Luke raised his blade and blocked it. He remembered the disarming twist his father had used on him countless times to disarm him and he used it. Palpatine never saw it coming, for he sorely underestimated the padawan. Luke twisted his wrist. The Sith Lord roared in agony, as his saber fell with his severed hand and he brokenly held the wounded appendage to his chest.

"You little fool...you'll pay for that!" Palpatine screamed.

"I'm the son of Anakin Skywalker...you didn't really expect me to just lay there and die, did you?" Luke asked, as his father helped him up.

"I'll take it from here, son. I'm proud of you," Anakin said.

"Thanks dad," Luke replied.

"Free Uncle Ben and take him and Master Yoda to the Falcon," Anakin said.

"But..." Luke started to protest.

"No arguing. I'll be right behind you," he replied. Luke started toward Obi-Wan, when Palpatine turned to him.

"Your brat isn't going anywhere, Skywalker!" Palpatine growled, as he launched a vicious amount of red Force lightning at Luke.

"No!" Anakin yelled. Luke covered his face and waited for the pain...but it never came. Luke opened his eyes and was horrified to see that Master Yoda had thrown himself in front of the attack. The tiny Jedi Master was flung across the room and Anakin roared, as he jumped into the lint of the attack. He crossed his silver sabers and blocked the lightning attack. His muscles burned and strained

against the oppressive attack. The sheer amount of power tore and shredded his tunic, leaving it in tatters.

"You will not win this time...Chosen One!" Palpatine's voice was gravely and hoarse. The lightning was distorting and wrinkling his skin, aging him fifty years in a matter of moments. Anakin's eyes filled with the light of the Force and the power struggle blew Luke and Obi-Wan, who was cradling Yoda, against the wall. They could only watch on in awe, as the battle for the galaxy raged before them...

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Padme stared at the holoscreen and the back of her captor's head, as they watched her husband battle the Sith Lord.

"Your Master won't defeat my husband," Padme told her captor. Tarkin turned to her with a cold stare and then smirked evilly.

"Yes...I know. This is all about my own self preservation, my dear. I am no fool. I know Palpatine cannot defeat your beloved husband," he said.

"Then you must know that you are finished as well," she replied. He chuckled evilly.

"Hardly, my dear Amidala...hardly," he said, enjoying the confusion on her face.

"With Palpatine gone, I am staged to inherit his new Empire and take power for my own. Like I said, I am not a fool and I know how powerful Skywalker is," he paused and then continued.

"There is only one thing in this galaxy that can control Anakin Skywalker...and I'm looking at her," he smirked evilly and stepped toward her. He lifted her chin with his finger, gazing at her with a cold hunger.

"You are instrumental to his demise. As long as I hold you captive...he is putty in my hands," Tarkin said, as he tugged her along by her shackles.

"Come along, my dear. It is time to put my plan into action...and you are an intricate part of that," he said, as he roughly pulled her struggling form along to his intended destination...

---

Han quickly had everyone file onto the Falcon. It was going to be a tight fit, but would suffice in getting them to Coruscant. The ship shuddered violently and the lights flickered.

"Man...that must be one hell of battle going on up there," he mentioned, as he saw Leia and Anna watching the blast door anxiously.

"I'm worried Han. Mom should be here by now if she got away," Leia said. Han cocked his blaster and started for the door.

"Stay here. I'm going back for her," he said

" *There's no need to do that, Captain Solo,"* a voice said. They looked around, but found no one.

" *You can't see me, but I assure you that your lovely mother is unharmed for now, girls. She is my honored guest. I do suggest, however, that your ship does not leave this ship. I would hate to have to use this vessel's weaponry on you,"* the voice said.

"What are we going to do?" Leia asked.

"We have no choice but to stay put. Once your dad is done dealing with one madman, he'll take on the other," Han said.

"But who was that?" Jeena asked.

"It was Tarkin," Lea answered.

"While he has no Sith powers, he's as evil as Palpatine. He thinks he has the one thing that can control Anakin...and he would be correct. There's no telling what that cruel bastard intends to do," Lea said, with tears in her eyes.

"Mom..." Han heard Leia mutter and he pulled her into his arms.

"It's okay Leia. Your dad ain't going to let anything happen to your mom," Han assured her.

---

The windows and view screen splintered and shattered, sending glass flying everywhere. The ships hull creaked and the ceiling cracked under the pressure. Anakin's already tattered tunic was ripped down to just shreds and the red lightning licked at his skin. His entire body glowed with a white aura. His sabers had started to crack under the pressure, but a white beam of energy then erupted from his palms, meeting Palpatine's attack head on, as he extinguished his sabers. The tyrant fought and struggled, but as Anakin's power grew, it only diminished his own. He screamed in rage, as he struggled to keep up his attack. He did not know how Skywalker had grown ever more powerful. It baffled him and enraged him. His new Empire was crumbling right before his very eyes. He poured all his hate and anger into his attack, but the light only seemed to consume his attack more quickly. His scream of agony mixed with rage was deafening, as his red lightning faded to blue. Palpatine's bleeding yellow eyes locked with those of his slayer. They were blinding white and made him look away in pain. He had failed...again. All his perfect plans were ruined...again! And destroyed both times by the one thing he despised most: Love. How could one that wasted so much time on a weak, frivolous thing such as love be so unstoppable? He could hear the fates laughing at him in his head, poking fun at him for being destroyed by such a useless emotion, for which he never knew...twice. Skywalker's voice pierced his thoughts and he sneered.

"Your reign is at an end, your highness. Never will another innocent person suffer, because of you," Anakin said.

"The Sith will rise again...someday. When you're no longer around to stop them...another will rise," Palpatine rasped. Anakin smirked.

"Then good thing there will always be plenty of Skywalker's around to deal with the evils of your kind," Anakin replied. Palpatine growled and tried to intensify his attack, but the beam of light only consumed his attack and drew closer. Palpatine roared in agony, as the light beam plunged through his chest. White flames ignited his body and his scream was soon silenced, as he was reduced to nothing more than ashes. The light faded and Anakin stood tall, as his son and best friend looked on. Master Yoda coughed and Anakin rushed to them, kneeling beside the small Master.

"Hang on, Master...we're going to get you back to Coruscant," Anakin said.

"No need, young Anakin. Dying, I am," Yoda rasped.

"No Master...you can't die!" Luke exclaimed. Yoda attempted a chuckle.

"Nine hundred years old, I am. My time, it most certainly is. Mourn me do not, but rejoice in my freedom," Yoda sputtered.

"A fine Jedi Knight, you will make, young Luke. Master Obi-Wan and Master Anakin, lead the Jedi Order, you must now. Rebuild and heal the Order, you must," Yoda coughed and gasped for air, before he stiffened slightly and then his head slumped to the side. Mere seconds after his death, his body disappeared into the embrace of the Force. The three Jedi were silent in mourning, for a moment, before Obi-Wan spoke.

"Come on, we need to get everyone off this monstrosity," Obi-Wan said. Anakin nodded in agreement, when they suddenly heard a mocking clap. They looked to the Holoscreen and saw Tarkin staring back at them.

"Bravo Skywalker...bravo indeed," Tarkin mocked.

"Your Master is dead, Tarkin...and you're going back to prison," Anakin stated.

"Oh, I don't think so. You see, I've come upon something of great value of yours. The Empire is mine now and I'll be leaving now for my new palace on Coruscant," he said.

"I'll stop you before you can leave," Anakin assured him.

"And if you do, she will most certainly die," he sated, as he stepped aside. He saw his wife chained to ship's core control terminal. Below the platform where her feet were, was nothing but space. The terminal was suspended to the ceiling and surrounded by three very narrow catwalks.

"Ani...I'm sorry," she whispered.

"Let her go!" Anakin roared. Tarkin smirked evilly.

"When I press this button..." he pointed, indicating a bright red button on the wall panel.

"This ship's self destruct sequence will be initiated. You will have fifteen minutes to rescue your precious wife and I estimate it will take you at least ten to make it all the way here. You must choose. If you rescue her, I escape and there is a slim chance you'll make it to an escape pod. If you come after me...she dies. Choose wisely," Tarkin said, as he initiated the self destruct sequence and disappeared out of sight.

"Ani...you have to stop him!" Padme cried, as tears rolled down her cheeks.

"You have to leave me. You don't have time to come after me and get us off this ship. There's no reason for you to die as well," she sobbed.

"I'm coming Padme. There is no way in Sith hell I'm leaving you," he said.

"There is no reason that the twins and Anna should have to lose both of us," she cried.

"They won't! Hang on angel, I'm coming," Anakin said, as he ran to the lift.

"Obi-Wan, get Luke to the Falcon and get everyone off this ship," Anakin said, as the lift door closed behind him.

"Dad!" Luke cried.

"He'll be fine Luke and he'll retrieve your mother," Obi-Wan promised, even through he knew the chances of them getting off in time were not good. Luke and Obi-Wan took the other lift down and headed for the Falcon.

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Sweat poured down Anakin's face, as he ran through the endless corridors on the center level. He reached the huge blast doors that led to the core terminal and they opened . An alarm sounded as he ran down another corridor to another pair of doors that slowly opened. He ran in and spotted his wife chained to the suspended terminal. He carefully walked across the narrow catwalk as fast as he could without falling.

"Ani..." she cried.

"Hang on angel," he said, as he reached her and sliced through her shackles. He carefully helped her across the catwalk as fast as possible and held her hand tightly, as they began running back the way he came. After several moments of navigating the corridors, they reached the lift. However, they had no time for that. He sent the lift up, leaving the elevator shaft open. He grabbed Padme around the waist and she hooked her arms around his neck. He held her tightly against him and jumped down the elevator shaft. Padme

screamed and buried her face in his chest, as he descended to the bottom level of the ship. Anakin landed softly, thanks to the Force and they quickly sprinted toward the docking bay. The ship shuddered violently, as it creaked and moaned. The top levels were collapsing first and debris fell around them.

"We're not going to make it!" Padme cried in despair.

"Yes we are," Anakin replied, determination lining his face. They reached the docking bay, as the ship began breaking apart.

"In you go, angel," he said, as he lifted her into the escape pod. He climbed in after her, sealed the pod shut, and launched them...just as the ship exploded. The force of the blast pushed the tiny pod and it went sailing toward Coruscant...

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The Millennium Falcon was in hot pursuit of Tarkin's escape ship and chased him through the capital city. Tarkin dodged and evaded the laser blasts and bounded around buildings. Han followed, expertly piloting them through the precarious system of turns.

"Han, if you can get above him, I'll drop onto his hull and take him out," Luke said.

"No way kid, it's too dangerous," Han yelled.

"We can't keep weaving through buildings like this," Luke protested.

"He's right. Drop the ramp, but you be careful!" Obi-Wan called to Luke's retreating form.

"You really think the kid knows what he's doing?" Han asked.

"No, he makes it up as he goes along, just like his father," Obi-Wan responded.

---

The ramp dropped, as they hovered above Tarkin's small ship.

"Luke...be careful!" Kira called. He kissed her quickly.

"I will," he promised, as he gathered the Force around him and jumped onto Tarkin's ship. The madman raised his glass dome and began shooting at Luke, who dodged and repelled the blasts with his light saber. He kept inching closer and closer to the cockpit. In a desperate move, Tarkin veered the ship off to the left, causing Luke to lose his footing. He hung on desperately to the side. Tarkin aimed his blaster at the young Jedi and Luke cried out in pain, as his hand was shot, causing him to lose his weapon. Luke looked down and saw the Falcon below him. He dropped, just as Han hit Tarkin's engine with a laser blast. Tarkin jumped onto the Falcon with Luke, just as his ship exploded in mid air. He toppled Luke and began trying to strangle the young man. Luke kicked his feet into Tarkin's stomach and then tackled him. He punched the aging man in the face three times. Tarkin growled, as Luke overpowered him.

"Your under arrest, scumbag!" Luke growled, as he thrust his palm upward. Tarkin screamed in agony, as his nose broke and blood gushed from his nose and mouth.

"That's for my mom, you bastard," Luke growled. Tarkin snarled and seized his blaster, pointing it at Luke, as he slowly stood up.

"Make peace with your All Mighty Force, you filthy brat," Tarkin sneered. Just as he squeezed the trigger, Han made a turn. The blasts shot harmlessly into the air, as Tarkin lost his footing. He screamed in fear, as he fell. Luke watched him fall almost twenty feet and land hard on the roof of a building. He saw red pool around his head and knew the tyrant was dead. He crawled back toward the ramp, where Austin and Jayden helped him in. He stumbled to the cockpit with Kira by his side.

"Tarkin is dead," he stated.

"Nice work, kid. I hope it was painful," Han replied.

"Fittingly so. Any word from mom and dad?" he asked.

"Artoo is picking up a signal from an escape pod that landed in the lake. We're going there now. I feel them both and they are fine," Obi-Wan said. Luke smiled and nodded. It was finally over.

---

Anakin waved to the Falcon in the distance, as he and Padme stood atop the floating escape pod. He put his arm down and looked at her, caressing her beautiful face.

"You took a big risk coming after me. There was a good chance we wouldn't have made it," she said.

"Did you really think I could leave you? That would have been like leaving my heart behind. But it doesn't matter now. We made it and this whole mess is finally over," he told her.

"I love you," she said, as she melted in his arms. Their lips crashed together in a searing kiss that quickly turned deep and passionate. She yelped in surprise, as he swept her into his arms, bridal style.

"I love you too. Our ride is here, milady," he said.

"Let's go home, my love," she replied. The Falcon descended, as far as it could and Anakin Force jumped onto the ramp, before it closed and flew toward Republica 500...

*The final chapter should be up soon! Thanks for reading and let me know what you think:)*

# Never Gone

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars.

AN: Here's chapter 25 and the finale of this story! Enjoy and please review!

Never Gone III

Chapter 25: Never Gone

Padme stood quietly, dressed in a gorgeous silver gown, as she watched her children on the dance floor. It had been a year already since the deaths of Palpatine and Tarkin. Tonight's celebration marked the first anniversary of Palpatine's attempted takeover. It had been a year filled with sorrow, as they mourned the heavy losses they suffered. But it had been eclipsed by the great joy the Skywalker family had seen also. She smiled, as she saw her husband approach her with their first grandchild in his arms. He had been showing him off to everyone again. She smiled, as he made his way toward her. The three-month-old baby in his arms grinned at Padme. The baby's blue eyes sparkled, just like his grandfather's and Padme kissed his head, which had started to grow very fine blonde fuzz.

"There's my handsome boy," she cooed to him.

"And my handsome man," she added, as she kissed her husband softly.

"He's a big hit. The life of the party, aren't you little man," Anakin said, as the baby yawned and fussed a little.

"I think someone is ready to go down for the night," Padme said.

"Yeah, we should take him home," Anakin replied, as he went to tell Luke. A few minutes later, Luke and Kira followed Anakin over and

both kissed their first born son. This night was doubly special for Luke and Kira, for it was this night a year ago that Luke had proposed to her and they had conceived their son. Once he was born, they saw no other fitting name for him other than Bail Anakin Skywalker. Little Bail was their absolute pride and joy.

"Are you sure you don't mind taking him?" Kira asked.

"Oh please sweetheart. You know Ani and I love having him. We'll be just fine, won't we baby?" she cooed to him, as he drank his bottle.

"Yeah, besides, grandma and grandpa have new toys for him to play with," Anakin said. Luke rolled his eyes.

"He's barely three-months-old and you guys are already spoiling him rotten," Luke half complained.

"Oh hush, we're grandparents and it's our job. Tell daddy he's being a killjoy," Padme cooed to the baby. Luke rolled his eyes again and Anakin chuckled.

"We'll be fine. Have fun and we'll see you for breakfast in the morning at Dex's. He can't wait to meet this little guy," Anakin said, as he placed his cloak over his wife's shoulders. Kira helped Padme wrap little Bail in a blanket and both parent's kissed him goodbye. Han and Leia had joined them by then, waving goodbye, before returning to the festivities. The celebration had left each couple reminiscing about the days that had followed Palpatine's destruction...

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*Exactly one year ago...*

They arrived home at Republica 500 and all took a bedroom in Anakin and Padme's penthouse apartment, which was more than large enough for everyone. The building was surprisingly untouched by the destruction and they were grateful to have a place of solace. Once they were alone, Kira had finally broken down in Luke's arms

and grieved for her father. He held her and rocked her gently, as she cried against his chest. Anakin had locked Isolder in a room for the night, telling him that he would be taken to prison tomorrow. Luke had to restrain himself from breaking his door down and pounding him into oblivion for hurting the woman he loved. But his mother promised that Isolder would be held responsible for Bail's death and that was enough for him. Kira's sobs had quieted and she pulled back to look up at him. He caressed her tear stained cheek.

"I was so scared that I was going to lose you too," she said.

"Yeah, but you're not. It's over now and I'm not going anywhere. We'll honor your father's memory and make sure people know what a good man he was," Luke promised. She nodded.

"I love you," she choked back a sob.

"I love you too," Luke replied, as he tilted his head and pressed his lips to hers in a gentle, yet passionate kiss. Kira moaned into his kiss and he broke their embrace momentarily.

"Marry me," he requested. Her eyes widened in surprise.

"I don't have a ring yet, but I sure would like to put one on your finger. We could go pick it out together and make sure it's the perfect one," he said. She gazed at him lovingly.

"Are you serious?" she asked.

"Of course I'm serious. I've been in love with you since we were twelve. Being your boyfriend makes me happy...but being your husband would make me even happier," he said.

"Oh Luke," he gushed, as she threw her arms around him.

"I want to be your wife more than anything," she replied, as she melted into his arm. Luke's heart swelled with joy.

"You've just made me the happiest man in the galaxy," he told her.

"You've made me happy too. But I know how we can make each other even happier," she replied. He raised his eyebrow playfully.

"How's that?" he asked. She answered him by lifting her tunic over her head and tossing it away. He smirked and swept her into his arms.

"I guess it wouldn't hurt to get a head start on our honeymoon," he said.

"I'm so glad we think alike," she replied, as he carried her to bed, where they would renew their love, indulge in each other, and begin healing with the power of love...

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The next few days were spent arranging a funeral and memorial for Mace Windu, Yoda, Bail Organa, and all the other fallen Jedi. It had been in a long, painstaking Council meeting two days prior to the service that they had decided to begin reconstruction of the Jedi Temple. But during this time, the Council also unanimously decided that Luke's efforts against Palpatine and Tarkin were to be commended and rewarded. Luke was Knighted that day and his father sliced off his padawan braid, much to Anakin's joy and pride.

At the memorial, a golden plaque engraved with the names of the fallen Jedi was set in a marbled structure. When the Temple was finished being rebuilt, the marbled memorial would take a special place in the gardens. A similar gold and marble structure was constructed for Bail Organa. Once the Senate building was repaired, the memorial would be placed in the atrium. The funeral service was beautiful and a fitting tribute to those who had lost their lives. A few days after the service, Luke and Kira picked out her ring and announced their engagement to their family. Anakin and Padme were thrilled and threw an engagement party for their family and friends. Their joy was only compounded a few weeks later when they learned that Kira was pregnant. Desiring to get married before she started showing too much, wedding plans were bumped up and held

just two weeks later. Kira chose to marry her beloved in the gardens of the Aldera palace on Alderaan at sunset...

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Padme draped Kira's veil over her face and stood back.

"You look beautiful sweetheart," Padme said.

"Thank you," Kira replied, blushing slightly.

"There's a few things I need to check on. I'll be right back," Padme said, as she left the room.

"Are you ready?" Leia asked her best friend, as she smoothed her own baby blue maid of honor dress.

"Yes...I'm anxious and nervous at the same time," Kira said.

"I think that's normal," Leia replied.

"So, when are you and Han going to do this, now that the big lug has gotten around to proposing?" Kira asked, indicating the new engagement ring on her finger.

"Well, I think we're going to enjoy being engaged for a while, but we're thinking perhaps a spring wedding at Varykino," Leia answered. Kira nodded.

"That's about six months away. It should give your mom plenty of time to plan it," Kira said. There was a knock and Kira called for them to enter. Obi-Wan stepped in with a big smile.

"Well, it looks like you're all ready. You look absolutely stunning, sweetheart," Obi-Wan said.

"Thank you, Ben. And thank you for giving me away. It means a lot to me," she replied.

"Your father was a very good friend of mine and it is an honor. He would be so proud of you," Obi-Wan told her.

"Thank you," she replied, as her eyes welled with tears. He offered her his arm and they left to take their places. The gardens were lit beautifully by the waning sunlight and an Alderaanian priestess stood at the alter, patiently waiting to begin the ceremony. Many from the Senate were there and many Jedi as well, including all the Council members. Lea was escorted to her seat by her son, who then walked back and took his place in the wedding party. Anakin and Padme entered together, arm in arm, and slowly walked to their seats in the front row. Anna and Jayden entered first, slowly walking down the aisle until they reached the alter. Austin and Jeena were next and slowly made their way to the alter as well. Both boys were dressed in their finest Jedi robes. Anna and Jeena's bridesmaids dresses were a beautiful lavender color. The maid of honor and the best man entered next. Han led Leia to the alter in a black tux that had baby blue trimmings, which matched her dress. They took their places and smiled at each other, as the music intensified. Luke stood at the alter in his finest formal attire, as Kira entered on Obi-Wan's arm in a beautiful white gown. Luke looked at her in awe, as she seemed to almost float toward him. She was breathtaking and he found himself forgetting to breath. She reached him and Obi-Wan released her arm, as she joined with Luke and took his seat beside Lea. Luke and Kira turned to the Holy woman, as she began the ceremony.

"We are gathered here today to join these two, Luke Skywalker and Kira Organa in the bonds of Holy Matrimony. What we bring together on this day, let no one come between. It gives me great joy to perform a union such as this. Not often does friendship blossom into true and pure love that exists between these two. They met as children and have been inseparable since. Childhood love is a wonderful thing, especially when it blossoms into a lifelong commitment and everlasting love that plainly exists between these two," the Holy woman paused for a moment. Anakin and Padme smiled at each other and joined hands, as she continued.

"You both have chosen to write your own vows. Speak from your hearts now to each other in the presence of your company, as a public profession of the love you share," the Holy woman said. Luke took Kira's hands in his own, as he gazed into her eyes.

"I've loved you since we were just kids," he began, as he smiled at her. She returned his smile

"All my friends thought I was crazy, since I was probably the only twelve-year-old that would rather spend time with a girl than with them. I knew even then that I wanted to marry you. I even asked you to marry me when we were fifteen, remember?" he asked. She nodded, smiling brightly.

"For those that have never heard the story, I became insanely jealous when Kira's father hosted a delegate from Faleen. The delegate's son was up to no good and hovered over Kira all evening. I'm surprised you ever spoke to me again after the way I acted...and I remember that you didn't for about a week. Mom grounded me for a month for punching the delegate's son. Dad though it was hilarious though. I remember begging for your forgiveness and pouring my heart out to you and even asking you to marry me. And you not only forgave me, but you told me you loved me and that you would marry me when we were old enough. If the universe had ended that night, I would have died happy," he paused for a moment.

"We've been through a lot since then and I know that losing your father has been one of the hardest things you've ever had to deal with. But I promise I will honor his memory by taking care of you for the rest of our lives. I love you more than anything. I've always loved you and I will always love you. This is my promise to you," he finished. Kira was on the verge of tears and took a moment to compose herself.

"Luke...I've loved you too, for as long as I can remember. You've always been my protector. I remember how you always defended me when other kids picked on me, especially since I was so small when we were children. I've known even probably longer than you have

that I wanted to marry you. You've always been the one and no other boy could even begin to compete, because you were, are, and always will be everything to me. And if you think I didn't enjoy it when you punched that Faleen creep, you would be incorrect. You've always been my Knight in shining armor. Daddy would be happy that you'll be here to love and take care of me...and our baby. I love you more than anything. I always have and I always will. This is my promise to you," she concluded.

"The Force will bless them and guide them through their journey as husband and wife. Luke, place this ring on Kira's finger, as a symbol of your love and commitment to her," He took the ring and slipped it on her delicate finger.

"Do you take Kira to be your wife? To love and cherish her for all time?" she asked.

"I do," he answered.

"Kira, place this ring on Luke's finger, as a symbol of your love and commitment to her," She took the ring and slipped it on his finger.

"Do you take Luke to be your husband? To love and cherish for all time?" she asked.

"I do," Kira answered.

"Then by the power vested in my by the All Mighty Force, I pronounce you husband and wife. You may kiss your bride," Luke lifted her veil and pressed his lips to hers in a passionate kiss. The audience applauded and slowly filed into the palace for the reception.

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Luke and Kira spent their honeymoon on Alderaan, while everyone else, except Anna, returned to Coruscant. The Senate building was nearly reconstructed now and the jury had been chosen for Isolder and Mon Mothma's trials. Both were found guilty and sentenced.

Mon Mothma was guilty on charges of conspiracy, accessory to the kidnaping of Leia Skywalker, and financial fraud. She was sentenced to a fifteen year term in the woman's maximum security prison on Bandomeer. Isolder was found guilty on charges of crimes against humanity, accessory to murder and kidnaping. He was given a life-sentence and sent to Kessel, which, for anyone who knew anything about Kessel, was pretty much a death sentence. The former prince wasn't expected to last more than a few weeks. They learned a few weeks later that Isolder had apparently already made enemies and committed suicide. He had been found hanging by his bed sheets from the rafters in his cell one morning.

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The months passed quickly. Anna continued as Queen. Luke had settled nicely into married life and was ecstatic about being a father. Leia prepared for her own wedding. She and Han had decided on a summer wedding instead of spring. They were making the final preparations for it, as it was only two weeks away now, when Kira went into labor. They were at Varykino at the time and the healers were called immediately. Nine hours later, Bail Anakin Skywalker was born. In the following weeks, final preparations were made for Han and Leia's wedding and the day finally came...

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Han stood nervously at the alter in the beautifully decorated gardens at Varykino, with Chewie behind him. He saw Anakin escort Padme to her seat with little Bail and he winked at Han, before walking back down the aisle. Padme smiled warmly at him, as she cradled her grandson. All of Leia's grandparents were there, as well as Sola, Darred, Ryoo, and Pooja, just as they had been at Luke's wedding. Jayden and Anna were first down the aisle, followed by Austin and Jeena. The boys wore their formal robes with silver trimming to match the girls' silver bridesmaid dresses. The best man and matron of honor were next. Luke escorted Kira to the alter in his formal robes, trimmed with gold to match her gold dress. They took their places and the music intensified. Leia entered on Anakin's arm in a beautiful, glittering white gown. She stole Han's breath away and

rendered him speechless when they reached the alter. Anakin relinquished her arm and gave her to Han. He took his seat beside his wife and grandson, as the Holy woman began the ceremony.

"We are gathered here today to join Han Solo and Leia Skywalker in the bonds of matrimony. What we bring together, let no one break. Speak from your hearts now and recite the vows you've written for each other," she began. Han nodded and looked into Leia's eyes.

"The first time we met, we didn't get off to such a great start. We were kids and I was a bully with a bad attitude problem. I was lucky enough that your dad cared enough about me to get me straightened out. I still made some bad choices and mistakes along the way, but you never held that against me. When we met again after fifteen years, we had both changed a lot. You had grown into the most beautiful woman I'd ever seen and I found myself falling in love with you in an instant. I never thought in a million years you could love a scoundrel like me, because I have nothing to offer you...except my love. You made me happier than I ever thought possible when you said you loved me in return. I'm going to spend the rest of my life loving you, cherishing you and protecting you. These are my promises to you," he finished. Leia blinked back her tears and took his hands in her own.

"You're right. When we first met, you were a bully. But I was a brat. I did a lot of growing up over the years too. And when you returned, I was drawn to you. I was happy when I was with you. We were meant to be, Han, and don't ever think that you're not good enough for me, because it's not true. You're the man I love and the man I want to spend the rest of my life with. Pay no attention to the muttering of some of the people I'm forced to work with. As mom and dad are fond of saying: those people wouldn't know love it smacked them in the face," she said. That drew some chuckles from those around them.

"We love each other and that's all that matters. And I promise to spend the rest of my life loving you, cherishing you, and yes, even

protecting you too, because you know I can. These are my promises to you," Leia finished.

"True love overcomes all obstacles and truly that is what we see here today. Han, take this ring and place it on Leia's finger, as a symbol of your love and commitment to her,"

Han did so.

"Han, do you take Leia to be your wife?" the Holy woman asked.

"I do," he answered.

"Leia, take this ring and place it on Han's finger as a symbol of your love and commitment to her,"

Leia did so.

"Leia, do you take Han to be your husband?" she asked.

"I do," Leia answered.

"Then by the power vested in me by the All Mighty Force, I pronounce you husband and wife. You may kiss your bride," she said. Han lifted her veil and their lips met in a tender, yet passionate kiss. There was applause and everyone followed behind the wedding party for the reception. That night, everyone except Han and Leia returned to Theed, leaving them alone at Varykino for their wedding night. That night, they stood together on the balcony outside their bedroom, holding each other and watching the stars. Leia felt shivers run down her spine, as her new husband placed kisses along her neck.

"I think it's time for us to go inside," she said, in a seductive tone.

"Reading my mind?" he asked playfully.

"Of course. You better get used to it," she replied.

"You're high maintenance...but you're worth it," he replied, as he swept her into his arms and carried her to bed to consummate their marriage...

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After Han and Leia's wedding, the entire Skywalker family took a trip to Tatooine. The Hutt Empire was crumbling now that Jabba was dead. Thanks to the Jedi, a democratic government was on its way to being in place. Slavery was outlawed and owners were forced to free their slaves.. Jedi Healers removed the explosion devices from the slaves and volunteer workers helped the people find jobs since they could now earn wages. It had been Anakin's goal to make Tatooine free of slavery and it had finally been realized. He knew Tatooine had a long way to go in establishing a stable government, but now that they were being annexed as a new member of the Republic, they would have the help and funding needed to do so. Republic workers and Jedi were assigned to Tatooine to oversee things until the planet was ready to stand on its own, which was at least a couple years away. The Skywalker family picked up the *Sapphire Angel* from Watto and it and the Millennium Falcon made the journey back to Coruscant, after taking Anna back to Naboo. So much had happened in so little time. And before they knew it, a year had passed already. The Skywalker family had already grown and would certainly continue to grow. The Sith had been vanquished forever...but it was guaranteed that should evil ever rise again, there would be a Skywalker ready to defend and protect innocents...

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*Present Day*

Anakin listened in contentment, as Padme sang a lullaby to their grandson. He walked to her and put his arms around her waist, peering down at the sleeping baby.

"You have a magic touch," Anakin told her, as he kissed her cheek. She picked up the baby monitor and they quietly closed the nursery door. They walked to their bedroom and undressed for bed. Anakin slipped on his sleep pants and Padme slipped into a short, white silk

nightgown. They got into bed together and snuggled close, as they always did. As she snuggled against his chest, she noticed the contemplative look on his face.

"What are you thinking about?" she asked.

"Everything...you mostly. I was just thinking about everything we've been through since that day I came back into your life. It's amazing when you think about it," Anakin said.

"I know. We've created some amazing memories together," she said.

"And we've got ourselves in and out of a few precarious situations," he replied.

"That's because the power of love conquers all," she responded, as their lips drew closer.

"I agree," he replied, as they kissed, letting their love consume them, for several passion filled moments.

"I can't imagine my life without you and I never want to," she said.

"And you won't have too...ever. Our love was too strong, even for the most evil beings that have ever come into existence. They tried to tear us apart countless times, but we wouldn't let them," he said. She smiled at him, as he pressed his lips to hers.

"Ani...there's something I've been thinking about," she said.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Well, my third term is over in a little over a year...and I don't think I'm going to run for re-election," she replied.

"You want to retire?" he asked. She nodded.

"I know you still want to be active with the Jedi Council, but I was thinking you could semi-retire. We could do the traveling we've

always wanted to do and spend time with little Bail...and any other future little ones our kids have. Then maybe later on, I could even teach a class or two," she said.

"You've really thought about this, haven't you?" he asked. She nodded.

"I love it," he replied.

"Really?" she asked.

"Of course I do, angel. I can't think of anything I'd rather do. Besides, I think we've earned the right to an early partial retirement," he said. She threw her arms around his neck and hugged him tightly.

"I love you," she gushed.

"I love you too, beautiful," he replied. She melted into his arms after that, as he captured her lips with his own. The flames of passion ignited between them, as they entwined together as one...

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After the end of Padme's term as Chancellor, she officially retired from public service. Kira Organa-Skywalker was elected to the Office as the youngest Chancellor in Republic history. Leia remained Senator of Naboo and Anna was elected to a second term as Queen. Anakin was an active member of the Jedi Council, which was led by Obi-Wan and Shaak Ti now. He even took occasional missions with his son, but spent the majority of his time traveling with Padme, spoiling his grandchildren, and teaching light saber training when Padme was teaching political science at the University on Coruscant. He and Padme were happy to step back and hand the reigns over to their children, especially as their large family continued to grow...

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*Five years later...*

Padme finished spreading the last table cloth over the last picnic table. Anakin and Darred had set up several in the meadow behind Varykino. Her mother, sister, and Shmi sat at one already, sipping at tea and chatting. Her father had passed on two years earlier in his sleep, due to natural causes. Padme missed him terribly, but was glad his death had been peaceful and painless. She had thrown an annual family picnic now to get them all together the last few years, despite everyone's busy lives. And now, they were anxiously awaiting everyone's arrival. She felt her husband's arms around her waist and looked up at him, as he kissed her cheek.

"Everything's ready. Sola and Darred are bringing all the food out now," he said. She nodded.

"Can you believe little Bail is turning six this week?" she asked.

"It doesn't seem possible. Time passes so fast," he replied.

"I know," she mentioned.

"Are you sure I can't get that really wizard speeder for him that we saw the other day?" Anakin asked.

"You can get him a speeder when he's sixteen...not six," she replied.

"But I was driving speeders when I was six," Anakin argued.

"You're the exception to the rule, my love. No speeder for Bail," she responded.

"Aw...but angel, it was a TX 9000," Anakin begged.

"Ani, you have a hanger full of ships and speeders to play with on *BOTH* Naboo and Coruscant. Do you really need another?" she asked.

"I guess not," he sulked.

"Besides, I like it most when you take me out for our cruises through the countryside in the yellow one with the open cockpit," she replied, as she combed her fingers through his hair.

"That one is a classic. It's a vintage model and worth a ship load of credits too," he mentioned.

"You and your shop talk," she teased.

"You and your political warble," he teased back, as he swept her off her feet. She squealed lightly and laughed, as he spun her around. Their lips met in a passionate array of kisses, as their hearts spoke to each other.

"Promise me you'll take me on that drive tonight?" she asked.

"Always," he replied, as he put her down and kissed her again.

"Well, it's good to see that some things will never change," Obi-Wan said, as he and Lea arrived.

"Hi, it's about time you got here. Where's everyone else?" Anakin asked, as he and Padme hugged them.

"They're coming. Lots of luggage to bring with little kids," Lea replied. Anakin and Padme smiled.

"We remember," they replied together. First, they saw Jeena and her husband Austin trekking up the path together. Once they reached them, everyone peered at the tiny bundle in her arms. Their first child, little Ben Martin, was four months old. Padme smiled, as she saw her youngest daughter coming with her fiancé, Zhane Typho. Behind them were her old friends and Zhane's parents, Dorme and Zac Typho. Anna had met Zhane when he began training in the Royal Guard and they fell in love. Zhane was very handsome, having inherited his father's jet black hair, but with his mother's texture, giving him soft curs. He had also inherited Dorme's complexion, though he had natural tanned skin and he had his father's dark eyes.

Anna hugged her parents tightly and they greeted Zhane, Dorme, and Typho with warmth. Jayden followed them with his girlfriend, Arra, who was one of Anna's most trusted handmaidens and decoy.

They could see Luke and Kira coming next with little Bail trotting along beside his father. Kira pushed a hover stroller that had a pair of blonde haired little girls in it. Bail's sisters, Katelynn and Katherine, or Kate and Kat, as everyone called them for short, had just turned three a few weeks ago.

"Grandma! Grandpa!" little Bail called, as he bounded toward them. Anakin scooped him up and hugged him tightly. Padme hugged him too and kissed his cheek. They watched with smiles, as Kira and Luke let the twin girls out of the stroller. They toddled toward Anakin and Padme and were greeted with hugs and kisses.

Han and Leia arrived last with their three children. Jacen and Jaina, who were four, toddled along ahead of their parents. The brown haired twins sprinted to their grandparents and cousins with excitement. Han and Leia held hands, as Han carried their other one-year-old son. He had dark brown hair like Leia's and she and Han had named him Anakin. Padme and Anakin welcomed them all with hugs, as the family sat down to eat together in the gorgeous meadow. After they ate, there was much play, as they enjoyed the beautiful day and eventually trekked down to the beach after everyone had donned their bathing suits. Padme smiled, as she watched most of her family play in the water together. They had the kids in various flotation devices and laughter filled the air, as they played. She sighed, as she felt tears well in her eyes. Anakin must have sensed her wistfulness and trudged out of the water. He came up to her and she smiled at him.

"You okay?" he asked.

"I'm wonderful. I was just thinking about how wonderful it is that we're all together," she replied. He wrapped his arms around her waist and hugged her tightly.

"And we'll always be together, angel," he promised.

"The Force has blessed us. I still can't believe we somehow made it through everything we did," she replied.

"Me either. It just goes to show how powerful love really is. Some may not put much stalk in it, but for me, it's everything," he said.

"Me too. It's because of love that we're here together as we are. I love you so much, Ani," she whispered to him, as she pressed her lips to his.

"And I love you, Padme, my angel," he replied, as he kissed her again with all the passion and love he held for her in his heart. They held each other close, as the sun began to dip low on the horizon. They watched their children and grandchildren, joy filling their hearts. The love that they had forged so many years ago had only grown and flourished. They had created more than just a family together. They had created a legacy that would never be forgotten and never gone.

The End

Well, this trilogy has finally come to a close. I hope you all enjoyed reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it. It was a fantastic journey! Thanks to all that reviewed!

Special thanks to PyramidHead 316 for always bouncing ideas around with me. :)

Thanks to Lea-Lynn. Love ya lots and miss ya! Know you're going through some rough times and I hope you are doing well.

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I hope you all continue to enjoy my futire projects! Thank you again, everyone!